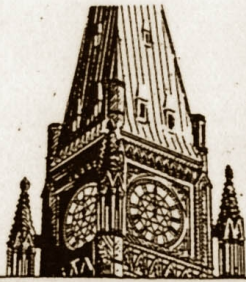


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HIV blood came from Arkansas jail

U.S. firm linked to Clinton bought from prisoners and sold to Montreal blood broker in '80s

BY MARK KENNEDY

A U.S. firm with links to U.S. President Bill Clinton collected HIV-tainted blood from Arkansas prison inmates in the 1980s and shipped it to Canada, newly uncovered documents reveal.

The contaminated plasma — used to create special blood products for hemophiliacs — is believed to have been infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. As well, it's likely the prison-

ers' blood was contaminated with hepatitis C.

The story of how that plasma was collected and found its way into the bloodstreams of unsuspecting Canadians stands as one of the most shocking — yet least explored — aspects of the tainted-blood tragedy.

Its significance is magnified by the fact that Mr. Clinton's name is associated with the story.

Mr. Clinton was governor of

Arkansas when the Canadian blood supply was contaminated in the mid-'80s. He was generally familiar with the operations of now-defunct Health Management Associates (HMA), the Arkansas firm that was given a contract by Mr. Clinton's own state administration to provide medical care to prisoners.

In the process, HMA was also permitted to collect prisoners' blood and sell it elsewhere.

HMA's president in the mid-1980s was Leonard Dunn, a personal friend and political ally of Mr. Clinton. Later, Mr. Dunn was a Clinton appointee to the Arkansas Industrial Development Commission, and he headed Mr. Clinton's 1990 gubernatorial re-election finance committee.

It's not known how many Canadians contracted HIV from the plasma of Arkansas prisoners, who were paid \$7 a unit, although it's likely that several

hundred, perhaps thousands, were infected by the tainted products.

At the time, U.S. companies that fractionate blood products had stopped buying prison blood because it was widely understood that, since many inmates practised unsafe sex or were intravenous drug addicts, their blood posed a high risk of carrying the AIDS virus.

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