

Purdue University scientist who made tabletop fusion claim sues colleagues

October 13, 2008

FROM ASSOCIATED PRESS

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. - A Purdue University scientist who was reprimanded for research misconduct over claims he produced nuclear fusion in tabletop experiments is suing two other faculty members for defamation.

Rusi P. Taleyarkhan, a professor of nuclear engineering, said in a complaint filed in Tippecanoe Superior Court that Lefteri Tsoukalas and Tatjana Jevremovic made false and malicious public statements that led to "a successful campaign to ruin Taleyarkhan and his sonofusion research."

Purdue, which in August denied an appeal by Taleyarkhan and stripped him of his named professorship, was not listed as a defendant in the defamation suit, although the university and other unidentified individuals could be added later, Taleyarkhan's attorney, John Lewis, said Monday.

Lafayette attorney Roger Bennett, who represents Tsoukalas, said he has no immediate comment because he hasn't had a chance to review the complaint. Telephone messages seeking comment also were left by The Associated Press for Ray Seach, an Indianapolis attorney representing Jevremovic, and for Purdue spokeswoman Jeanne Norberg.

Tsoukalas is a Purdue professor of nuclear engineering; Jevremovic is an associate professor of nuclear engineering.

The lawsuit seeks unspecified damages for defamation, harassment and intentional and negligent infliction of emotional distress. Taleyarkhan published a paper in the journal *Science* in 2002, claiming he had produced nuclear fusion using a tabletop experiment that collapsed tiny bubbles in a liquid with powerful ultrasound vibrations. Scientists have long sought a simple way to produce fusion in hopes of harnessing it as an energy source.

A Purdue panel did not investigate the 2002 *Science* paper, which was published when Taleyarkhan was a researcher at Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Tennessee, but said he misled the scientific community by claiming his "bubble fusion" findings had been independently replicated.

In a report to Purdue in July, an investigative committee found that Taleyarkhan falsified the research record twice: That he arranged for one of his students to appear as co-author of a paper to create the appearance that the student had witnessed the experiment, then announced that the paper was an independent confirmation.

He was allowed to remain a faculty member but forbidden to serve as a major professor for graduate students for at least three years.

Copyright 2008 Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten, or redistributed.