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## **Kaine, Allen debate turns to subject of recommendation to transfer Soering**

***By Ray Reed***

Former Gov. Timothy M. Kaine renewed his explanation Wednesday for recommending Bedford County killer Jens Soering be transferred to a German prison. Former Sen. George Allen, his debate opponent, took the opportunity to say anyone convicted of a crime in Virginia should serve his sentence here.

“Tim and I have a very fundamental difference of opinion of how we handle violent murderers and criminals,” Allen said.

Kaine said crime rates declined during the times he was mayor of Richmond and governor of Virginia, and “I’m very proud of my record as a crime fighter. I take these matters very seriously, including this one.”

According to political commentator Bob Holsworth, the exchange may have been Kaine’s most vulnerable moment during the 90-minute debate between the Democratic and Republican candidates for the U.S. Senate seat being vacated by Sen. Jim Webb, D-Va.

Holsworth is a former dean and political science professor at Virginia Commonwealth University who offers his viewpoints on the blog Virginia Tomorrow.

Soering is serving two life terms in Virginia for the 1985 stabbing deaths of Derek and Nancy Haysom in their Boonsboro-area home.

Kaine, during his final week as governor in January 2010, sent U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder a recommendation that Soering be transferred to a prison in his native Germany.

The German government had requested the transfer months earlier, Kaine said, but he reviewed the case and, “recognizing how challenging it was,” refused to OK the move.

Then, the Germans promised to keep Soering in prison for two more years and never let him return to the United States.

“That happened at the end of my term,” Kaine said. “And at that point, with those guarantees, my attitude was good riddance.

“This was a foreign citizen who abused our hospitality and committed a horrible crime. We had the ability to safely transfer him back to his country, where he would be imprisoned on the German nickel and not ours, and at that point and with those assurances I felt sufficient to make a recommendation, knowing the attorney general would review it,” Kaine said.

Allen responded by reviewing his own record of ending the state’s lenient parole system and increasing the prison time for felons and violent criminals when he was Virginia’s governor from 1994 to 1998.

“This person here had two life sentences for a double murder, a very heinous, vicious murder,” Allen said of Soering.

“My view is, when Virginia judges or juries sentence someone, they ought to serve that sentence,” Allen said, adding: “I’m sure there probably are a lot of people in prison who would say, ‘if you release me from prison and send me to some other country, I promise I will never come back to America.’ ”

“This is a fundamental difference of opinion,” Allen said.