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Sharon lines up big guns in suit against Time

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THE libel case of *Westmoreland vs CBS* is currently the big splash in court cases involving the media, but you can expect stiff competition for headlines once *Sharon vs Time Inc.* gets under way.

Late last week, PAGE SIX obtained the power-heavy list of character witnesses former Israeli Defense Minister Ariel Sharon will be calling to attest to his reputation during the trial, which starts here in Federal District Court on Oct. 29.

Sharon, who charges he was libeled by *Time* in a Feb. 21, 1983, article, has hauled out some truly impressive ammunition. Among those scheduled to be speaking up in court for the feisty general (who is now commerce minister in Israel's coalition cabinet) are:

Manhattan District Attorney Robert Morgenthau, GOP Sen. Al D'Amato, retired Air Force General George Keegan and Admiral Elmo Zumwalt, retired U.S. Chief of Naval Operations.

Sharon has already stirred up major pre-trial interest in the case with an unusual public deposition last month in which he described the *Time* article as "one of the most terrible things that has been done to the Jewish people."

In its story, Sharon alleges, *Time* falsely implied that he had encouraged the massacre of Palestinian refugees in two West Beirut refugee camps.

In his deposition, Sharon referred to the magazine's piece as a "blood libel" — a phrase used to describe accusations by anti-Semites down through the ages that Jews killed non-Jews to obtain blood for use in Passover rituals.

Others who will be coming forward either to vouch for Sharon's character or to rebut *Time's* defense of its piece include:

Exodus author Leon Uris; Bayard Rustin, chairman of the A. Phillip Randolph Institute, a civil rights organization; Ray Cline, former deputy director of intelligence for the CIA and former director of intelligence for the State Dept., and William Van Cleave, chairman of President Reagan's Advisory Committee on arms control and disarmament.

Martin Gould, of the firm of Shea & Gould, will be handling Sharon's case.