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Gran Havana Cigar & Coffee Lounge Timeline

Spring 1979 – Soviet Army destroys Mesdaq family home in Afghanistan. Nine-year-old Ahmad Mesdaq flees to the United States with his parents and infant brother.

May 1994 – Mesdaq leases a 2,000 square foot storefront at 560 Fifth Ave. and opens Gran Havana Cigar & Coffee Lounge.

March 2000 – Mesdaq purchases the circa-1934 building at the northeast corner of Fifth Avenue and J Street for \$1.3 million. While in escrow with a non-refundable \$100,000 deposit, Mesdaq learns adjacent properties are being acquired by a developer who plans to develop a large luxury hotel. His lawyer offers to transfer the sale to the developer (GRH, LLC) for only the cost of Mesdaq's deposit, but the developer says that the property is overpriced and cites condemnation as a more cost-effective tool to acquire it. Mesdaq closes escrow and buys the property.

April 2002 – Mesdaq submits a \$1 million renovation plan to the Centre City Development Corporation (CCDC). The plan is approved and renovations begin.

March 2003 – Gran Havana Cigar & Coffee Lounge opens in its newly renovated 8,000 square foot corner location, three blocks from the new baseball stadium.
-Mesdaq submits plans to the CCDC to add two stories of residential lofts.
-GRH, LLC submits plans to develop the 334-room Marriott Renaissance Hotel.
-GRH, LLC plan is fast-tracked and given preliminary approval.

June 2003 – CCDC informs Mesdaq that his present plan and all future plans will not be approved.

January 28, 2004 – CCDC board officially approves the GRH/Marriott Renaissance development project and votes to send the plan to the San Diego City Council for their approval.

March 5, 2004 – Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego votes 5-to-1 against granting variances to GRH, citing the hotel's size and height as not in keeping with the Gaslamp Quarter's historic character.

March 11, 2004 – San Diego Planning Commission votes 4-to-3 in favor of recommending to the City Council that it approve the hotel development plan.

April 12, 2004 – Mesdaq files an 'inverse condemnation' lawsuit against the CCDC and city redevelopment agency that asserts that the government is attempting to take private property without bringing a formal eminent domain proceeding.

April 27, 2004 – The San Diego City Council votes 8-to-1 in favor of condemning the Gran Havana to make way for the hotel.

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