

Bank Bandits Had a 5th Man, Member Says

Possible Ties To White Supremacists Uncovered

By Bob Ruth, Dispatch Staff reporter.

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Des Moines, Iowa-- A fifth member of the so-called Midwestern Bank Bandits who has not been charged participated in at least one of the gang's robberies last year, testimony yesterday claimed.

Kevin McCarthy, 19, a former member of the gang, did not mention the name of the fifth suspect on instructions from U.S. Assistant Attorney Robert Dopf. McCarthy was testifying during a bank robbery trial in U.S. District Court in Des Moines.

But the Dispatch has learned that the fifth suspect is a neo-Nazi activist living in the Philadelphia area who had stayed for many months at a white supremacist compound in eastern Oklahoma.

The FBI office in Philadelphia has been investigating the fifth suspect's possible links to the gang for months but has not compiled enough evidence to indict him, the Dispatch has learned.

Dopf refused to comment after yesterday's testimony.

Authorities had discussed only four men as being members of the gang--- McCarthy; Peter "Commander Pedro" Langan, 38; Scott A. Stedeford, 27; and the late Richard Lee Guthrie, Jr., 38.

Langan is scheduled to stand trial Jan. 8 in U.S. District Court in Columbus in connection with 1994 bank robberies in Columbus and Springdale, Ohio. He was arrested Jan. 18 behind 585 Reinhard Avenue on Columbus' South Side after a brief shootout with law officers.

Stedeford is on trial in Des Moines in connection with the March 29, 1995, robbery of the Boatman's Bank of West Des Moines. Guthrie was found hanging in his Kentucky jail cell July 12, an apparent suicide after pleading guilty to 19 bank heists.

During 5-1/2 hours of testimony yesterday, McCarthy said the fifth suspect participated in a bank robbery in Madison, Wisconsin, on August 30, 1995.

After the robbery, Stedeford drove that man to a "farm compound" in Oklahoma, McCarthy added.

U.S. District Judge Charles R. Wolle has banned the prosecution from presenting evidence in the Stedeford trial about the gang's alleged ties to white supremacist organizations.

Because of that decision, McCarthy was not permitted to identify the Oklahoma compound. However the Dispatch has learned it is Elohim City, a 1,00-acre compound in eastern Oklahoma.

Timothy McVeigh, the accused Oklahoma City bomber, phoned someone in Elohim City two weeks before the April 19, 1995, explosion at the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building.

The fifth suspect has not been charged in either the Wisconsin robbery or connected by authorities to the bombing.

The West Des Moines, Columbus and Springdale robberies were among 22 bank heists the gang is suspected of pulling off in 1994 and 1995 in Ohio and six other states.

In testimony yesterday, McCarthy also recounted his relationship with Mark Thomas, a 44-year-old neo-Nazi leader who lives near Allentown, Pa. He had lived off and on with Thomas for the past six years, McCarthy said.

Thomas at one point supplied him with fake identification, McCarthy said. Thomas also attended a meeting around November, 1994, near Van Buren, Ark., where McCarthy was introduced to Langan and Guthrie, McCarthy testified.

Thomas also taught him how to fire and clean shotguns, rifles and pistols, McCarthy said.

Gang members went about their bank robbery business cautiously, McCarthy said. They would sometimes stake out many banks before choosing one to hit. They carried police radios during all their robberies, McCarthy said.

This precaution paid off when the gang was about to rob a bank in Phoenix, he told jurors. Moments before they were to enter the bank, gang members heard police talking about a customer there.

The customer had mistakenly handed a teller a bag of marijuana-- instead of money-- to deposit, McCarthy said. The gang called off their robbery when they suspected police would arrive for the marijuana situation.

McCarthy earlier this year testified in a hearing in Columbus in the Langan case. He is expected to testify again during Langan's January trial.