

Terrorism, Bank Robberies Are Legacy of White Separatists

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First in a Series

(Editor's Note: Bombings...terrorism...bank robberies...white separatists. They've all been linked, at one time or another, in the McCurtain Gazette stories about the Oklahoma City bombing, one of the worst terrorist incidents in the history of the U.S. Yet, few Americans or Oklahomans today have any inkling of the ideology that drives these home-grown revolutionaries, whose links to the "OKBOMB" case may be closer than previously believed. The series of stories that follow detail the resurrection of white separatism, the ideology that drives the movement and the criminal enterprises that finance it.)

Stirring from the ashes of Whidbey Island in Washington state, memories of the revolutionary figure Robert Jay Mathews — leader of the near-mythical white separatist group known as the "Order" — were rekindled earlier this year during stunning testimony detailing a string of bank robberies in the Midwest. At a pre-trial hearing this summer, and at a criminal trial last month, crucial evidence portrayed a robbery spree of white separatists as part of their plans for a home-grown revolution.

It bears a striking resemblance to a similar pursuit a decade ago by Mathews, whose death in '84 elevated him to the pantheon of demi-gods in the Aryan movement.

Arrested and charged so far are alleged gang members Kevin W. McCarthy, 19; Peter K. Langan, 38; Scott A. Stedeford, 27; and Richard L. Guthrie Jr., 37. In November, the government put its first defendant on trial in Des Moines, Iowa, with defendant Scott Stedeford being found guilty after only two hours of deliberation by a jury.

More bank robbery trials are pending. Providing riveting testimony about the group earlier was a former "skinhead" who described an audacious plan by a rag-tag group of revolutionaries bent on the destruction of the federal establishment. "Our goal was to open the door to overthrow the United States government," said Kevin McCarthy.

McCarthy, who entered a plea bargain agreement with federal prosecutors in exchange for testimony, told the court that he was recruited by the gang in the fall of 1994.

Afterward, he participated in six bank robberies, with the major portion of proceeds divided equally among members, McCarthy testified.

Some of the loot, he testified, was put away for expenses; some for other "acts." McCarthy was not asked to elaborate on what these acts might have been. But allegations that they included funding for various terrorist operations — such as the

Oklahoma City bombing — have caused the FBI to investigate several individuals and groups that may have received funds.

His "cell," McCarthy testified, was part of what the members called the "Aryan Republican Army." And his leader, he said, was Peter "Commander Pedro" Langan.

Federal prosecutors allege that, beginning with a Jan. 25, 1994, heist in Ames, Iowa, Langan and the others went on a binge of 21 other bank robberies across seven states — netting more than \$250,000. None of the money has been recovered.

Based on telephone records eyewitness accounts and official statements provided the FBI in conjunction with the Oklahoma City bombing investigation, the McVeigh-Nichols "cell of alleged bombing conspirators may be linked to the Aryan Republican Army more closely than has yet been reported.

That linkage, sources have told the Gazette, may be the result of a rebirth of a secret society of ultra-right-wing revolutionaries...long believed to have been destroyed but rising, Phoenix-like, from the ashes of a group that emerged a decade ago.