

# **BANDITS, HATE GROUP LINKED PROSECUTORS: BANK JOBS FINANCED CAUSE**



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Byline: Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA -- A group of white supremacists robbed Midwestern banks to bankroll their movement, which teaches that people of color are "mud races" and gays should be executed, federal prosecutors say.

The five men - including Mark Thomas, a minister in the Christian Identity Movement and leader of the Aryan Nations in Pennsylvania - were charged Thursday with conspiring to rob seven banks in 1994 and 1995.

Three of the men were also charged last year with robbing 22 banks of \$250,000 as members of the self-proclaimed "Mid-Western Bank Bandits," also known as the Aryan Republican Army. The gang's alleged ringleader, Peter Langan, 38, is standing trial in Columbus, Ohio.

Thomas recruited from his home in Macungie, a small town in eastern Pennsylvania, the indictment said.

One recruit, Kevin McCarthy, testified at Langan's trial Thursday that the group robbed banks to spread its beliefs and finance terrorism against the government.

"We believed the government was corrupt and that it was evil," said the 19-year-old McCarthy, one of the five charged Thursday.

The name of another suspect, Michael W. Brescia, 24, has surfaced during the investigation of the Oklahoma City bombing. He once lived with a German citizen whom bombing suspect Timothy McVeigh tried to call 12 days before the attack.

McVeigh's sister, Jennifer, reportedly told the FBI that her brother helped plan some of the Midwest bank robberies and asked her to launder some of the loot. McVeigh's lawyer, Stephen Jones, said McVeigh was only joking.

U.S. Attorney Michael R. Stiles said Thursday's indictment was not connected to the Oklahoma investigation.

Four suspects split proceeds from robberies and gave some money to Thomas, who planned but did not participate in the heists, Stiles said.

Thomas, 44, surrendered to the FBI in Allentown, while Brescia was arrested outside his house in Philadelphia as he was leaving for work.

The indictment charges that Thomas, Brescia, Langan, McCarthy and Scott William Stedeford, 27, conspired to rob banks in Ohio, Missouri, Wisconsin and Iowa from October 1994 to December 1995.

Text of fax box follows:

#### Local connections

Peter Langan is on trial in Columbus for a series of bank robberies, including the Society National Bank in Springdale in 1994.

Richard Guthrie, who pleaded guilty to robbing 19 banks across the Midwest, was found hanged to death in his Kenton County Jail cell in 1996.

CAPTION(S):

#### Photo

The Associated Press - Mark Thomas sat down to eat in his house in Macungie, Pa., Thursday before surrendering to the FBI in Allentown, Pa. Authorities said that Thomas, an Aryan Nation leader, recruited young white supremacists for a bank robbery gang.