

SYLVANIA BANK HOLDUP LINKED TO NEO-NAZIS FUNDS ALLEGEDLY HELPED SUPREMACISTS

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Author: JOHN MICHAEL KELLY BLADE STAFF WRITER | Page: 1 | Section: A

A bank in Sylvania was the last of 22 held up by a gang of neo-Nazis who call themselves the Aryan Republican Army, a federal grand jury in Philadelphia and a witness in a trial in Columbus alleged yesterday.

The grand jury returned indictments involving seven of the robberies.

Kevin McCarthy, one of those named in the indictment, testified yesterday for the prosecution in the trial of Peter Kevin Langan, the alleged leader of the gang, who is being tried for 1994 robberies in Columbus and Springdale.

The Mid-American Banking Center at 5830 Monroe St. was robbed Dec. 19, 1995, by two white men in their middle 20s.

McCarthy, 19, of Philadelphia, testified in Columbus yesterday that he and Scott Stedeford, 27, of Ardmore, Pa., robbed, among others, the bank in Sylvania.

Driving the getaway car was Peter Kevin ``Commander Pedro" Langan, 38, also of Ardmore, Pa., McCarthy testified.

The robbery was the last in a two-year spree in Ohio and six other states in 1994 and 1995 by a gang that law enforcement called the ``Midwest Bank Bandits."

Neither the FBI nor Mid-American would say how much was taken in the Sylvania robbery.

The FBI has estimated the robbers took about \$250,000 - almost none of which has been recovered - in all the holdups combined. Much of the stolen money was used to fund white supremacist causes, McCarthy said in Columbus.

Speculation that one of those causes may have been the bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City on April 19, 1995, was fueled by the indictment and arrest in Philadelphia yesterday of Michael Brescia, 26, of Philadelphia, and Mark Thomas, of Macungie, near Allentown, Pa.

Mr. Brescia and his roommate at Elohim City, a Christian Identity compound on the Oklahoma-Arkansas border, have been named, along with Oklahoma City bombing defendants Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols, in a wrongful death lawsuit filed by Edye Smith, whose sons Chase, 3, and Colton, 2, died in the bombing.

Christian Identity contends whites are descendants of the lost tribes of Israel.

Mr. Brescia, McCarthy, and Stedeford, who was convicted in November of robbing a bank in West Des Moines, Ia., all were sent to Elohim City by Mr. Thomas, a Christian Identity preacher who is the head of Aryan Nations in Pennsylvania.

Aryan Nations is the principal Christian Identity sect in America. It is headquartered in Hayden Lake, Idaho.

McCarthy testified yesterday that he was introduced to Mr. Langan by Mr. Thomas in November, 1994, at a restaurant in Van Buren, Ark., miles from the Elohim City compound.

Four members of the Aryan Republican Army - McCarthy, Mr. Langan, Stedeford, and Richard Lee Guthrie - were arrested in January and May, 1996.

Mr. Guthrie was found hanged in his jail cell in Covington, Ky., in July, three days before he was to testify in a preliminary hearing against Mr. Langan.

McCarthy turned state's evidence, testifying against Stedeford in Iowa and against Mr. Langan yesterday.

In his testimony in Iowa, McCarthy said that a fifth person - who he did not name - had taken part in a bank robbery in Madison, Wis., on Aug. 30, 1995.

The grand jury in Philadelphia indicted Mr. Brescia and Mr. Thomas for conspiracy in the Madison robbery and six other robberies.

Jennifer McVeigh, sister of Oklahoma City bomb suspect Timothy McVeigh, said in a sworn statement to federal authorities on May 2, 1995, that her brother had given her three \$100 bills to exchange for "clean money" because, her brother said, the bills were from a recent bank robbery in which he and others had participated.

A paid informant for the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms has reported regular visits of Mr. McVeigh and Oklahoma City bombing witness Michael Fortier to Elohim City, according to a copyright story in Tuesday's McCurtain County (Oklahoma) Gazette.

At the time of those visits, Mr. Brescia was in residence at Elohim City, rooming with the security chief there, Andreas Strassmeir, a German national.

Canadian Broadcasting Corp. has placed Mr. McVeigh, Mr. Brescia, and Mr. Strassmeir together at a strip club in Tulsa 11 days before the bombing.

Three witnesses in Junction City, Kan., where the Ryder truck used in the Oklahoma City bombing was rented, and in Herington, Kan., home of bomb suspect Terry Nichols, have identified a photograph of Mr. Brescia as "John Doe No. 2," whom the FBI was seeking for five months after the bombing, the McCurtain County Gazette has reported.

The FBI says John Doe No. 2 is a soldier who is unconnected to the bomb plot.

U.S. Attorney Michael Styles said Mr. Brescia was arrested without incident outside his home in Philadelphia. He insisted the indictment was not connected with the Oklahoma City bombing case.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

Caption: ASSOCIATED PRESS In Philadelphia yesterday, FBI agent Bob Reutter, left, and U.S.