

THE MORNING CALL

THURSDAY
FEBRUARY 6, 1997
NO. 38,111

50¢

© 1997 The Morning Call
Inc. All Rights Reserved

Alleged Aryan recruit said he'd fight arrest

■ Michael Brescia warned he'd 'have it out,' a federal prosecutor says in a successful bid to block bail.

By JOHN P. MARTIN
Of The Morning Call

PHILADELPHIA — A college student allegedly recruited by Aryan Nations leader Mark Thomas to rob banks warned last summer that he would "have it out with the feds" if agents tried to arrest him, a prosecutor said yesterday.

At the time, Michael Brescia, 24, carried a semiautomatic pistol that investigators believe he used to help rob a Madison, Wis., bank on Aug. 30, 1995, Assistant U.S. Attorney Michael Schwartz said.

Schwartz offered the account, based on statements from an unnamed government witness, during a new bid to keep Brescia jailed until



Michael Brescia

...held without bail

Please See **BRESCIA** Page A9 ►

BRESCIA

►Continued From Page A1

his trial for conspiracy and bank robbery.

U.S. District Judge Ronald L. Buckwalter agreed, ordering Brescia, a part-time La Salle University student, held without bail.

Brescia and Thomas, of Longswamp Township, were arrested without incident last week and indicted with three other men for conspiring to rob banks in 1994 and 1995. Investigators assert the gang, which called itself the Aryan Republican Army, stole \$250,000 from 22 banks and plotted terrorist acts and the overthrow of the government.

On Monday, a U.S. magistrate judge was poised to release Brescia on \$200,000 bail and accept as surety the deed to his parents' Roxborough home. Schwartz immediately appealed.

He told Buckwalter yesterday that FBI agents this week interviewed a new witness whose statements bolstered the government's case that Brescia was a danger and a risk to flee.

The witness told investigators Brescia and his fiancée, Esther Den Hartog, came to his house in May and discussed the arrests that month of Scott Stedford and Kevin McCarthy, two defendants in the case.

In his waistband, Brescia allegedly carried a 9mm semiautomatic Taurus pistol, a weapon prosecutors say was used in the Wisconsin robbery, but one they never have recovered.

Schwartz said Brescia told the witness he "believed that he would go to jail" because Richard Guthrie, a fellow gang member, was cooperating with the government.

Brescia then said: "I'm just going to have it out with the feds if they come after me."

Defense attorney Edward Daly, appointed on Monday to represent Brescia, argued that Brescia has known of the investigation since last summer, yet never tried to flee.

"He was under investigation at that time for a charge that was much more serious than the charge

that is before you," Daly told the judge.

Daly did not elaborate on his statement. Neither he nor Schwartz would discuss it after the hearing.

"Let me roll on just what was said in the courtroom," Daly said, "and let's just say the U.S. Attorney didn't deny it."

A lawsuit filed by the relatives of some victims of the April 1995 bombing of the Murrah federal building in Oklahoma City contends Brescia was an accomplice to the blast.

Federal officials have dismissed any link between the bombing and the robberies, but have not responded to specific questions.

They have acknowledged that Brescia lived at the time at Elohim City, a white separatist compound in Oklahoma that bombing suspect Timothy McVeigh telephoned two weeks before the bombing. Brescia's fiancée is the granddaughter of the compound leader, a Christian Identity leader named Robert Millar.

Thomas and other alleged members of the robbery gang, also dubbed the Midwestern Bank Bandits, have visited the compound.

About 20 of Brescia's relatives and friends attended the hearing yesterday to vouch for his character. Brescia's father, a retired Philadelphia firefighter, wore his dress uniform. With him was Brescia's mother, brother and fiancée.

In his four-page ruling, Buckwalter said only Brescia's lack of criminal history and his ties to the community weighed in his favor. But, he wrote, "electronic monitoring and a parent's oversight are not able to prevent either defendant's fleeing or danger to the community."

Like Thomas, Brescia awaits arraignment on the charges.

McCarthy, a Philadelphia teen-ager cooperating with the government, is expected to plead guilty on Feb. 21. Scott Stedford awaits sentencing in an Iowa bank robbery; Guthrie committed suicide in prison last summer.

A sixth suspect, Peter Langan, is being tried for robbery in Columbus, Ohio.