

OKLAHOMA CITY COVERUP COLLAPSING?

Government's Case Rocked By New Revelations

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With the trial of Tim McVeigh scheduled to begin on March 31, the government's case has been severely damaged by information that has recently come to light which suggests that a much larger conspiracy was involved and that the government had prior knowledge of the terrorist bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, but failed to prevent it. As if that were not enough, a report just completed by the Justice Department's Inspector General is said to focus on details of gross irregularities in the FBI crime lab that could have a major impact on the case. Ambrose Evans-Pritchard, writing in last Sunday's London Telegraph said the report reveals that "the FBI crime lab altered forensic conclusions to accommodate government claims that the blast, which killed 168 people in the spring of 1995, was caused by a 4,000lb ammonium nitrate bomb."

The report, which has been covered by the mainstream press in this country, is said to conclude that some of the FBI lab officials have been subjected to pressure to falsify evidence and commit perjury in order to assist the prosecution in obtaining convictions. Not that this is anything new to those who followed the Ruby Ridge massacre and the subsequent trial of Randy Weaver, in which the government's case disintegrated when the court discovered that the prosecution had introduced falsified evidence provided by federal agents.

A recent AP report cited the allegation by "the supervisor of another unit" that the crime lab's explosives unit "used improper procedures resulting in unfounded conclusions that led to what he called 'forensic prostitution.' "

According to the AP, "three senior FBI agents, who evaluated evidence in the Oklahoma City bombing case, have been removed from their jobs as a result of a Justice Department investigation into the lab."

The government continues to maintain that the bombing was the act of a single person, Tim McVeigh, supported by an accomplice, Terry Nichols, who stayed in the background. This scenario has been seriously damaged by information that has come to light in recent weeks. The arrest early this month of Michael Brescia, who is alleged to have been involved in a series of bank robberies staged by a bizarre domestic terrorist group, has undermined the single bomber theory, suggesting a much wider conspiracy. Brescia has been identified by a number of witnesses as 'John Doe II', who was seen with McVeigh in the days just prior to the bombing.

THE ARYAN REPUBLICAN ARMY

The terrorist organization which staged the bank robberies in order to finance its illegal activities has been described as a neo-Nazi group which calls itself the

Aryan Republican Army. McVeigh is said to have been connected with this organization. The ARA was described in an earlier article by Evans-Pritchard as "the secret military arm of the American neo-Nazi movement. It is committed to the overthrow of the US government, the extermination of America's Jews, and the establishment of an 'Aryan Republic' on the North American continent."

The British journalist described the ARA as modeled after the Provisional IRA , or "Provos", as they are known in the U.K., which is organized into small, underground cells that are difficult to infiltrate.

The "intellectual" leader of the organization is a man named Mark Thomas, a former "state chaplain" of the Ku Klux Klan and now Pennsylvania director of the Aryan Nations. He is also a minister in the "Christian Identity" movement, a sect that believes Europeans to be descendants of the lost tribes of Israel, and a member of the underground Posse Comitatus. Thomas who describes himself as a student of Nietzsche and the theories of Carl Jung, has expressed sympathy for the "anti-colonial" struggle of the IRA.

Thomas owns a house in Macungie near Allentown, Pennsylvania which has become a hangout for followers he has recruited, who frequently travel with him to a Christian Identity compound at Elohim City, Oklahoma.

The leader of the bank robbers is a 38-year-old high school dropout named Peter Langan, a.k.a. "Commander Pedro." He is currently standing trial in Columbus, Ohio on charges resulting from a bank robbery there. One of Thomas' recruits, Kevin McCarthy, testified at Langan's trial last week that "the group robbed banks to spread its beliefs and finance terrorism against the government," according to an AP report.

Langan's partner in larceny, Richard Guthrie, was found hanged in his Covington, Kentucky jail cell in 1996. A short time before his death, Guthrie had made a deal with the FBI and federal prosecutors, agreeing to testify against Langan and the ARA in return for a reduced sentence. He also spoke to reporters from the L.A. Times about a book he was going to write regarding the bank robberies and the people involved in them.

According to Evans-Pritchard, Langan's "Aryan Army cell was well-equipped for terrorism." Among the items seized by the FBI when they arrested him were "a shoulder-fired rocket launcher, Semtex explosives, hand-grenade canisters, 11 pipe-bombs, and an arsenal of guns." The clandestine group is also said to have had a system of safe houses and false documents of good quality.

THE RECENT INDICTMENTS

Thomas and four others were indicted on January 30 by a Philadelphia grand jury that charged them with conspiracy to commit bank robbery and receive stolen money in the years between 1994 and mid 1996. The indictment charged

that Thomas had "recruited young people at his residence . . . including defendants Scott Anthony Stedeford and Kevin William McCarthy, to rob banks and commit other crimes on behalf of the Aryan Republican Army."

James Ridgeway writes in the Villiage Voice that Thomas "introduced Stedeford and McCarthy to Richard Lee Guthrie Jr. and Peter Langan, the leaders of the Aryan gang."

Altogether, the gang is said to have committed 22 robberies, seven of which are covered in the indictment, bringing them more than \$250,000. Thomas is alleged to have provided the gang with equipment they used in connection with the robberies, including false identity papers, radio equipment and a getaway van, and they, in turn, gave him a portion of the stolen money. The indictment maintains that Thomas used the money "to further the goals of the organization, building a separatist white bastion and to purchase weapons and other items necessary for additional bank and armored car robberies."

Stedeford stood trial last year and was convicted of participating in a 1996 robbery that took place in Des Moines, Iowa. The 19-year-old McCarthy has testified against Langan at his trial in Columbus, Ohio, implicating Thomas as the person who planned the robberies.

ANDREAS STRASSMEIR

Another person named in the indictment is Michael William Brescia, a 24-year-old part-time college student who lived for a time with Andreas Strassmeir, a former German army officer, at Elohim City. As mentioned in a previous column, Evans-Pritchard revealed Strassmeir's connection with the Oklahoma City bombing in several articles that appeared in the London Telegraph last year. He also noted that Glenn and Kathy Wilburn, an Oklahoma couple who lost two grandchildren in the terrorist attack, have "accumulated evidence which they claim indicates Strassmeir was an undercover US agent who, while based at Elohim City, penetrated the white separatist movement and alerted the authorities about the impending attack."

The Wilburns accuse the FBI of refusing to pursue leads which place a number of suspects near the scene of the crime with Tim McVeigh, in order to avoid exposing government negligence in the incident. Glen Wilburn maintains, "This was a sting operation that went berserk."

Now that the trail is getting hot, some journalists who had previously ignored Strassmeir are beginning to spin the story. Mark Eddy, writing in the Denver Post, is at pains to point out that Strassmeir's "grandfather helped found the German Nazi Party," and the Village Voice's James Ridgeway informs us that, "No one knows much about Strassmeir, who is variously reported to be a Berlin neo-Nazi, a German army intelligence officer, and possibly even a U.S. or NATO undercover agent."

In fact, Andreas Strassmeir's identity was revealed months ago in the British press. He is the son of Guenter Strassmeir who was a member of the West German Bundestag (parliament) for more than 20 years and is a close confidant of German Chancellor Helmut Kohl. Andreas, who is now 37, was once an intelligence officer in the Bundeswehr, as the modern German army is called. He was assigned the task of tracking down and turning East German infiltrators.

Those who would swallow the cover story regarding Strassmeir's "neo- Nazi" sentiments exhibit an extraordinary naivete regarding the social order in modern Germany. It would be considered extremely odd for a person of his background to join a neo-Nazi group; sort of like a member of the British aristocracy hanging out with skinheads -- not the done thing, old boy. It is difficult to imagine that Strassmeir had much in common with the lads at Elohim City, although it is not hard to understand why an intelligence agent sent to infiltrate their organization might pretend to have an affinity for their cause. As Evans-Pritchard put it, "...it was a curious existence for a man who had once been a lieutenant in the Panzer Grenadiers." During the course of the five interviews he had with the London Telegraph, Strassmeir observed that, "The Right-wing in the US is incredibly easy to penetrate if you know how to talk to them. Of course it's easier for a foreigner with an accent; nobody would ever suspect a German of working for the federal government."

The point that needs to be understood here is that joining an American neo-Nazi group is the last thing a German with genuine National Socialist convictions would ever dream of doing. To such a person, being a Nazi is a uniquely German thing. Nazis don't like foreigners very much, especially Americans.

"JOHN DOE II"

Michael Brescia, the fifth man named in the indictment, attended LaSalle University in Philadelphia for a time as a part-time student. He also lived with Thomas, who introduced him to Guthrie and Langan, before moving to Elohim City where he shared a house with Strassmeir. His identification as the elusive "John Doe II", who was sought for a time by the FBI as an accomplice of Tim McVeigh, was discussed at some length in a previous column.

Although the Village Voice article claims that "the slight Brescia is said to bear scant resemblance to the swarthy suspect on the now discarded wanted posters," Evans-Pritchard wrote in the July 1 Telegraph that "two witnesses came forward immediately after the bombing and told the FBI that they knew who the John Doe II in the artist's impression was."

One witness was a college student named Catina Lawson, who was a close friend of McVeigh and the other was her mother, Connie Smith. Lawson told the FBI on the day after the bombing "he had a tattoo on his arm and his name was Mike, but I didn't know the rest of his name."

Lawson also told the London Telegraph "I never found out what he was doing in Kansas, but I remember [his girlfriend] saying that he came from Pennsylvania, and I saw the Pennsylvania tags on his car."

Smith was introduced to "Mike" by her daughter. She recalls seeing him in the local town of Herrington with Tim McVeigh. Many witnesses have reported seeing McVeigh in the Ryder truck that was used in the bombing, but almost all of them have said that he was not alone.

The description of John Doe II circulated by the FBI shortly after the bombing noted that he had a tattoo on his arm. There is no indication that the FBI pursued the lead given them by Lawson and Smith. Two weeks ago the FBI discontinued its search for John Doe II, saying that he was not involved in the bombing. U.S. Attorney Michael R. Stiles has said that Brescia's indictment is not connected with the Oklahoma City investigation.

Brescia has been named in a wrongful death suit brought by Edye Smith whose two children were killed in the bombing. Although served with the suit by Smith's attorney's, Brescia did not respond within the time limit provided by law and has apparently decided to default on the action.

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE ROBBERIES AND THE BOMBING

An article by J.D. Cash in the January 28 McCurtain Daily Gazette, an Oklahoma newspaper, revealed that Tim McVeigh's sister, Jennifer, told government authorities that her brother was involved with the group that committed the bank robberies.

Cash wrote, " In a sworn statement, dated May 2, 1995, Jennifer McVeigh, then 21, said that she was given three (3) \$100.00 bills and asked that they be exchanged for 'clean money' because, her brother said, the bills were from a recent bank robbery in which he and others had participated."

Jennifer McVeigh was first interviewed by the FBI in Florida, following the arrest of her brother and Terry Nichols on suspicion of being involved in the Oklahoma City bombing. She asked to make the May 2 affidavit after being informed that her answers would have to be checked with a lie detector test and that she would be asked about the completeness of the information she had provided.

Other links between the Oklahoma City bombings and the ARA bank robberies have been noted recently in local press accounts. A video tape that was apparently intended for the instruction of recruits was seized in the raid on the safe house in which Langan was arrested. Lagan, who appears in disguise on the tape, explains the need to overthrow of the federal government, adding that, "Federal buildings may have to be bombed and civilian loss of life is regrettable but expected."

Cash notes that the tape was "made only a few months before the Oklahoma City bombing."

The real bombshell in the J.D. Cash article is his revelation that "an ATF paid informant has linked McVeigh and his ex-army buddy Michael Fortier to Elohim City and several members of the bank robbery scheme."

According to Cash, the informant revealed "that the Tulsa office of the ATF was conducting surveillance and collecting data on residents of Elohim City prior to and after the bombing of the Murrah Federal Building."

Denver Post reporter Mark Eddy revealed the identity of the informant to be Carol Howe, who lived briefly at Elohim City. The Denver Post article said that Tim McVeigh's attorney Stephen Jones told them "Howe, gave the information to agents working for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms before the bombing, and to the FBI after the explosion."

During the period prior to the bombing, the informant recalls visits by McVeigh and Fortier (who has admitted having prior knowledge of the crime) to the compound at Elohim City, as well as "regular visits by Langan, Guthrie, Stedeford and McCarthy."

Howe also passed conversations and video tapes of ARA members to her handler, Special Agent Angela Finley of the Tulsa ATF office. She told the Daily Gazette how Agent Finley had helped her set up video equipment so that "certain subjects could be filmed handling explosives."

Andreas Strassmeir is said to be clearly visible on the tape, painting hand grenades with two members of the ARA. Howe also said that Strassmeir was involved in discussions regarding "the bombing of a federal building," which she conveyed to Agent Finley "in the fall of 1994."

All of which is entirely consistent with what Strassmeir told the London Telegraph during the series of interviews he did with them last year: "The ATF had an informant inside this operation. They had advance warning and they bungled it," he said. "What they should have done is make an arrest while the bomb was still being made instead of waiting till the last moment for a publicity stunt."

The McCurtain Daily Gazette has previously reported that "Strassmeir is believed to have also been an ATF 'mole' at Elohim City."

A PARALLEL CASE

Those who are still unable to believe that the federal government would engage in such an egregious and unscrupulous coverup, while the mainstream media

primly avert their gaze and pretend not to notice, should consider the following news item:

"Law-enforcement officials were told that terrorists were building a bomb that was eventually used to blow up the World Trade Center, and they planned to thwart the plotters by secretly substituting harmless powder for the explosives, an informer said after the blast.

"The informer was to have helped the plotters build the bomb and supply the fake powder, but the plan was called off by an F.B.I. supervisor who had other ideas about how the informer, Emad Salem, should be used, the informer said."

Another fanciful "conspiracy theory" spun out of thin air by the notorious "Right Wing Media Cabal," and sent chasing around the world via the Internet, only to be blown back at us by "British tabloids"? Well, actually it is an excerpt from an article by Ralph Blumenthal that appeared in the October 28, 1993 New York Times. Didn't your regular newspaper or anchor person tell you about it? They must have been preoccupied with weightier matters that day.

The article goes on to recount how Mr. Salem, who apparently developed a suspicious nature during the course of his career as an Egyptian Army officer, made secret recordings "of his talks with law-enforcement agents, [that portray] the authorities as being in a far better position than previously known to foil the February 26th bombing of New York City's tallest towers."

It seems that Mr. Salem was used by the U.S. Government to infiltrate the group of Muslim extremists who bombed the World Trade Center, but the plan to substitute a "harmless powder" for the explosives was scrapped by U.S. agents, who then proceeded to bungle the whole operation.

A transcript of the recordings "quotes Mr. Salem as saying that he wanted to complain to F.B.I. Headquarters in Washington about the Bureau's failure to stop the bombing, but was dissuaded by an agent identified as John Anticev."

If this sounds all too familiar isn't it time that somebody took note of it? Or do we just allow the ATF and the FBI to go on playing silly games with people who blow up buildings, until they get it right?

CONCLUSION

As things stand at present, it is difficult to see how the government can go forward with the trial of Tim McVeigh. They have discredited their star witness, Tom Kessinger, the clerk at the Ryder rental agency where McVeigh is said to have rented the truck used in the bombing. Mr Kessinger is the witness who provided the description of "John Doe II" from which a sketch was made and widely circulated. He now agrees with the official position that the man he had seen was a soldier named Tod Bunting, who really hadn't been with McVeigh at

the agency that day. It was all just a dumb "mistake." The problem is, Mr Kessinger has already given a number of interviews in which he ridiculed the Bunting story, so he cannot be used as a witness. According to Evans-Pritchard, "the prosecution is relying on a single man who thought he might have seen McVeigh getting out of a Ryder truck."

And then there is the matter of the evidence. Frederick Whitehurst, the chemist at the FBI lab who was suspended for telling tales out of school, contends that "bomb-residue contamination was found in the lab in the summer of 1995," according to the L.A. Times.

While the FBI maintains that this happened after the evidence from Oklahoma City had been examined, the validity of this evidence is very much in doubt. Whitehurst, whom the FBI once considered to be their top expert on bomb residues, has been deposed by Stephen Jones, counsel for Timothy McVeigh, and may be called to testify for the defense.

Could this be the deus ex machina that gets the government off the hook? The Tulsa World noted laconically that, "Jones said he may seek an evidentiary hearing."

If the court should decide that the evidence is not admissible due to conditions that prevailed at the FBI lab, Jones may ask for a directed verdict of acquittal on the grounds that the government does not have a case. In that event, don't be surprised if the court grants his request. That may be the only hope the government has of avoiding exposure of their malfeasance in this affair.

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