

Elohim, Terror, and Truth

by William F. Jasper

Imagine a rustic, rural redoubt populated by well-armed white separatists who regularly play host to some of the most virulent racist leaders of the Aryan Nations, Ku Klux Klan, and White Aryan Resistance. Imagine further that this secluded commune serves as a Butch Cassidy "Hole in the Wall" hideout for a notorious gang of Aryan bandits wanted by federal authorities for a two-year spree of bank robberies spanning six states -- robberies in which explosive devices were frequently used as diversionary instruments. These gangsters dub themselves the Aryan Republican Army (ARA), spout Marxist revolutionary gibberish, and make videotapes of themselves denouncing the U.S. and boasting of the group's "nuclear, chemical, and biological warfare program." Then picture Timothy McVeigh, the main suspect in the April 19, 1995 bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, calling this encampment two weeks before the deadly explosion and asking for a German ex-soldier who serves as the enclave's director of security and allegedly has expertise in explosives. Visualize also a traffic ticket issued to McVeigh a short distance from this gathering spot for racist/national socialist misfits.

Taxing your powers of mental fantasy still more, see in your mind's eye a convicted murderer who is venerated as a martyr of the Aryan cause by the inhabitants of this enclave, who is scheduled to be executed on April 19, 1995, and who -- to stretch credulity to the limit -- was involved in a plot to attack the same Murrah Building in Oklahoma City 12 years earlier. Then envision at least one federal undercover informant for the Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) who warns her federal superiors in November 1994 -- months before the bombing -- that the German security director has declared, "It's time to go to war," and, "It's time to start bombing federal buildings." Moreover, she tells them that the German has joined with a notorious Aryan/KKK leader from Tulsa to case the Murrah Building in Oklahoma City as a potential target. As a final element, envisage that immediately after the deadly Oklahoma City bombing of April 19, 1995, she tells federal FBI and ATF investigators that she had seen bombing suspect McVeigh and the suspect known only as John Doe No. 2 at the backwoods compound.

Dream Bust

What does such a conjuration add up to? A dream bust for the FBI, ATF, and every other federal law enforcement agency, naturally. It also adds up to a real-life place known as Elohim City and real-life individuals matching the descriptions "imagined" above. But there is something very wrong with this picture, aside from

the very wrong-headed notions of the odd assortment of unsavory characters who drift in and out of this strange community. For some unknown reason, this bonanza for law enforcement has been seemingly immune from investigation by federal authorities. Perhaps the failure to apprehend the much-sought-after bank bandits at Elohim City can be attributed to incompetence, poor intelligence, and even worse communication. And the Elohim City residents who allegedly stated their intent to bomb federal buildings and then surveilled the Alfred P. Murrah Building with that object in mind? Perhaps the failure to bust them on conspiracy charges before the bombing can also be attributed to more incompetence and bureaucratic foul-ups.

But what excuse can be made for not apprehending -- at the very least for questioning -- *after* the bombing those conspirators fingered by the informant? Keeping in mind the earnest promises of President Clinton and Attorney General Janet Reno that no stone would be left unturned, and the fact that over 2,000 federal agents were unleashed on this investigation, it boggles the imagination to consider that individuals who automatically should have been considered prime suspects were ignored completely. Hundreds of FBI agents swarmed over Kingman, Arizona in search of McVeigh's buddy, Michael Fortier. Dozens more swooped down on bombing suspect Terry Nichols' 12-year-old son, Josh, in Las Vegas. An army of federales descended on James Nichols' farm in upstate Michigan. Hundreds more were dispatched throughout the land to track down and interview anyone who might have known McVeigh, Nichols, and Fortier. Investigators were sent overseas to the Philippines to check on Nichols' past activities there. Over 20,000 individuals were interviewed.

However, no investigators were sent to Elohim City. No attempt was made to interview the individuals accused by the ATF's undercover informant. No search warrant was issued to search for explosives or John Doe No. 2, or to see if fingerprints or other evidence linking McVeigh or Fortier to the settlement could be found. Even now, after the latest Elohim City-connected outlaw action, federal authorities continue to turn a blind eye to the obvious. On February 15th, two men opened fire on law enforcement officers during a routine traffic stop in Ohio. The spectacular shootout at point-blank range (during which none of the participants was hit) was caught on the highway patrolman's video camera and shown on news programs to millions of viewers nationwide. The gunmen, who escaped, were identified as Chevie and Cheyne Kehoe, brothers who had spent time at Elohim City. Robert Millar, the bearded patriarch of this so-called "Christian Identity" compound, confirms that the brothers had lived at Elohim City, along with four Pennsylvania men indicted earlier this year in the ARA bank robberies. Yet, there is still no sign that federal officials are looking into the glaring Elohim/Oklahoma City connection. In a February 23rd article, Associated Press writer Paul Query quoted an unnamed "law enforcement official in Washington" as saying that "Elohim City is not a current subject of interest."

Past Record

This odd reluctance to investigate the most obvious suspects is all the more amazing when one considers the operations of the FBI , U.S. Marshals, ATF, and other federal agencies starting several years before the bombing, and in the two years since that deadly event. Only one month before the Oklahoma City blast, on March 17, 1995, this reporter attended hearings in Boise, Idaho conducted by Congressman Helen Chenoweth (R-ID) on the abuse of police powers and excessive use of force by federal agencies. The special congressional hearings examined testimony regarding charges that officers of the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and other federal agencies were exceeding their authority and jurisdiction, violating the rights of law-abiding citizens, and presenting an increasingly confrontational and authoritarian image. There is no question that these and other federal agencies have assumed a more aggressive and more heavily armed law enforcement posture in recent years. That goes double for the FBI and ATF, which were badly scandalized by their criminal activities associated with their fatal fiascoes at Ruby Ridge and Waco.

Following the Oklahoma City bombing, the ATF and FBI seem to have lost any temporary sense of restraint they may have felt compelled to exercise due to the storm of criticism they had received for their Waco debacle. Over the past two years they have gone on a post-OKC arrest binge, with a series of high-profile raids against gun dealers, militia groups, and other individuals presented as dangerous threats to national security. Many of these cases have fallen apart in court, repeatedly revealing a super-zealous and inordinate deployment of federal law enforcement resources to provoke and entrap those with little indication of proclivities toward criminal activity, and a simultaneous under-deployment of scarce resources to genuine criminal threats. This troubling phenomenon has been on full display, for instance, with the media-spectacle arrests of the "Viper Militia" in Arizona, the "Macon Militia" in Georgia, and the "Lampley Militia" in Oklahoma. Also, witness the case of Richard Jewell, the unfortunate Atlanta security guard who was grossly mistreated and unfairly implicated in the Olympic Park bombing. All of these stand in sharp contrast to the conduct of federal officials toward the denizens of Elohim City, who have been associated with numerous criminal acts and have been linked by various witnesses to the Oklahoma City bombing.

Revenge of the Condemned

Located far from the beaten path, in wooded hills near the Oklahoma-Arkansas border, Elohim City is the creation of Robert Millar, a 70-year-old Christian Identity "preacher" who also was "spiritual adviser" to convicted murderer Richard Wayne Snell, a former leader of a militant affiliate of Elohim City known as the Covenant, Sword, and Arm of the Lord (CSA). One of Millar's granddaughters is married to James Ellison, an ex-convict and former leader with Snell in the CSA. The Ellisons live at the enclave along with Millar and a constantly fluctuating population of 70 to 100 residents. On the day of the Oklahoma City bombing, Millar was attending Snell's execution at an Arkansas

state prison. Snell was being executed for the murder of a black Arkansas State Trooper. According to Arkansas prison official Alan Ables, "Snell repeatedly predicted that there would be a bombing or explosion the day of his death."

According to Carol Howe, a former neo-Nazi and Elohim City resident who became an undercover informant for the ATF, for several months before the execution date Millar had been calling for his followers to initiate a pre-emptive strike against the government. Howe, who has been in hiding, was quoted in an interview with reporter J.D. Cash of the **McCurtain County Gazette** as saying that "Reverend Millar was working the people into a frenzy about a holy war that he said would come by the anniversary of Waco." That anniversary, of course, was April 19th, the same date as the execution of Richard Snell, who had conspired with Millar's grandson-in-law, Ellison, to blow up the Murrah Building in 1983.

The emergence of ATF informant Carol Howe is important for a number of reasons. Her testimony and the reports made by her ATF supervisors provide significant new evidence that:

- Federal law enforcement officials had prior warning of the bomb plot.
- Timothy McVeigh and Michael Fortier were linked to Elohim City.
- John Doe No. 2 and other John Does seen by eyewitnesses may be individuals associated with Elohim City.
- Federal officials lied about having an informant (Miss Howe) at the compound.
- Federal authorities had good cause to detain certain Elohim City residents, who should have been considered suspects in the bombing, but stubbornly refused to do so.

ATF Informant

Carol Howe first came in contact with the inhabitants of Elohim City after hooking up with Dennis Mahon, a notorious racist and former leader of the Ku Klux Klan in Tulsa. Mahon, the stereotypical, hate-spewing extremist, is currently a leader of the White Aryan Resistance (WAR) and the National Socialist Alliance (NSA). He has told THE NEW AMERICAN that for several years after the start of the Persian Gulf War he received monthly payments from Iraqi intelligence. One of Mahon's closest friends was Andreas "Andi" Strassmeir, a 37-year-old former German army officer who was director of security for Elohim City. Another of his close friends was Strassmeir's Elohim City roommate, Michael Brescia, a 24-year-old college dropout from Philadelphia. Brescia was recently indicted and arrested in Pennsylvania along with three other former residents of Elohim City

for his alleged role in seven bank robberies attributed to the Aryan Republican Army.

Howe, at first glance, would seem an improbable recruit for Mahon's racist skinhead brigade. The petite, attractive, 24-year-old is a former honors student, beauty pageant contestant, and debutante from a prominent Tulsa family. She contacted Mahon after seeing one of his advertisements for the Ku Klux Klan, and for a while they were "romantically involved." However, later, when they had a falling out and Mahon threatened her with bodily harm, she reported him to the police. That action brought her to the attention of the local ATF office, which recruited her to spy on Mahon and the Elohim City bunch. From the summer of 1994 until a few weeks before the bombing in April 1995, Howe was making regular reports to her ATF supervisor, Angela Finley. After the bombing, she was sent back into the compound for additional intelligence.

Federal authorities insist that Howe's ATF reports contain no warnings of plots to bomb federal buildings, as claimed in the Cash interviews; they say her first mention of the Strassmeir-Mahon bomb conspiracy occurred when she was debriefed two days after the bombing. Even if that is true, federal officials still have hard questions to answer concerning why they failed to pick up the pair of alleged plotters *after* the bombing. But there are good reasons to suspect that Howe's story is more accurate than the official line. Past credibility is one reason. During her work for the ATF, her records show, she was polygraphed over a dozen times and passed every time. In contrast, when federal prosecutors were asked by McVeigh's defense team for Carol Howe's ATF informant records in discovery, they were told that the records didn't exist. When it was shown that the records did indeed exist, an angry Judge Matsch ordered the records delivered to the defense and threatened the prosecutors with removal from the case if they lied to him one more time.

Stranger From Germany

Howe's testimony that Strassmeir was at the center of the agitation at Elohim City to engage in violent, revolutionary activity also appears to fit better with known facts in the investigation than do the explanations and actions of federal officials regarding the mysterious German national. Strassmeir, the son of a very prominent politician in Helmut Kohl's government, came to the United States in 1989 and took up regular residence in Elohim City in 1991. When his station wagon was impounded by the Oklahoma Highway patrol, curious papers were discovered in his briefcase. They appeared to be classified papers detailing negotiations by Strassmeir on behalf of Petruskie Associates of Manassas, Virginia to buy Boeing 747s from Germany's Lufthansa Airlines.

What was this impoverished neo-Nazi activist doing negotiating multi-million-dollar deals from a log cabin settlement in the Oklahoma outback? Before answers could be found to such questions, extraordinary pressure was brought

to bear to release the vehicle. "There were some people from the Carolinas at one of the military bases who called," recalled Kenny Peace, the tow truck operator who had custody of Strassmeir's car. "Somebody called and said they were from the [U.S.] State Department. He wanted to know why the car was impounded and who he had to talk to to get it released." According to Peace, "The phone calls came in from the State Department, the governor's office, and someone called and said [Strassmeir] had diplomatic immunity. He was just a weird cookie."

This "weird cookie" was also the intended recipient of a telephone call to Elohim City on April 5, 1995 -- two weeks before the bombing -- placed on a calling card purchased by Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols under the pseudonym "Daryl Bridges." While FBI agents supposedly conducted a global manhunt for the "others unknown" listed as co-conspirators in the federal indictment against McVeigh and Nichols, Strassmeir remained unmolested. Finally, in January 1996 -- nine months after the bombing -- Strassmeir fled the U.S., slipping across the border to Mexico and then on to Germany. Suddenly, when the prey was out of reach, federal authorities developed an interest and decided they wanted to interview Strassmeir, which they did -- by telephone. Meanwhile, in Herington, Kansas, where Terry Nichols lived (and where McVeigh had also lived while in the Army), more witnesses were being found who had known "Andi the German" as a friend of McVeigh.

Vincent Petruskie is Strassmeir's Lufthansa deal partner. Strassmeir described him as "a former CIA guy who my father had known." Petruskie told THE NEW AMERICAN that "Andi wanted to work for the U.S. government -- DEA, Justice -- undercover. [He] thought his background with military and German government would help...."

"Right Wing" Infiltration

In a series of interviews with British journalist Ambrose Evans-Pritchard after he had fled to Berlin, Strassmeir gave additional testimony to support the evidence suggesting that he was an undercover operative for a U.S. agency. "The right wing in the U.S. is incredibly easy to penetrate if you know how to talk to them," he said. "Of course, it's easier for a foreigner with an accent; nobody would ever suspect a German of working for the federal government."

"The ATF had an informant inside this operation," he told Evans-Pritchard. "They had advance warning and they bungled it. 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." In an article for the ***Sunday Telegraph***, Britain's largest daily newspaper, Evans-Pritchard reported that when he asked Strassmeir if the informant would ever speak out, he replied with passion: "How can he? What happens if it was a sting operation from the very beginning? What happens if it comes out that the plant was a *provocateur*? What then? The

relatives of the victims are going to go crazy, and he's going to be held responsible for the murder of 168 people? Of course the informant can't come forward. He's scared stiff right now."

When THE NEW AMERICAN asked Evans-Pritchard if he believed Strassmeir was referring to himself when speaking in the third person of the "informant," he replied, "Of course, there's no doubt that is exactly what he meant to convey. He was stating it as plainly as he could" without admitting criminal culpability on his own part.

Although Strassmeir had been allowed to flee beyond the reach of the law, other associates of his remained within grasp. Glenn and Cathy Wilburn, who had been tracking Strassmeir, filed a civil suit in 1996 naming Strassmeir and Michael Brescia along with McVeigh, Fortier, "and other unknown individuals" for the wrongful deaths of their grandsons Chase and Colton Smith, two of the day-care center children killed in the bombing.

Brescia, who had played in a skinhead rock band at Elohim City, disappeared for several months after Strassmeir's return to Germany. Late last year he turned up at his parents' home in Philadelphia. On January 30, 1997 he was arrested and charged, along with three other Elohim City habitues from Pennsylvania, in the ARA bank robbery spree. Considering how long Brescia and his associates had been allowed to wander about freely, it is fair to ask whether federal authorities *ever* would have arrested them except for the pressure brought by the Wilburns and others.

Shortly before federal agents swarmed in to arrest Brescia, members of various militia groups had begun a campaign to draw attention to the conspicuous disinterest of the Justice Department in the Elohim City resident who bears a resemblance to the sketch of the suspect known as John Doe No. 2. In January, Arlin Adams and other members of local militia groups began putting up "Unwanted" posters on telephone poles in Brescia's neighborhood and throughout Philadelphia. The posters read, "UNWANTED by the FBI -- Michael Brescia aka 'John Doe #2,'" and provided several paragraphs of text on Brescia, as well as his parents' Philadelphia address and a photograph of Brescia beside the familiar sketch of the bombing suspect. Ambrose Evans-Pritchard was in Philadelphia to photograph the poster effort and reported on it in the January 26th issue of the ***Sunday Telegraph***. In a matter of days, Brescia and three of his cohorts were arrested -- although not for the Oklahoma City bombing.