

# **Murrah Building Targeted Long Before McVeigh**

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By Kevin Flynn

White supremacists hatched plot in 80's to retaliate against federal government. In February 1983, a North Dakota farmer named Gordon Kahl killed two U. S. Marshals trying to arrest him for a probation violation.

Kahl, a member of the tax-protesting Posse Comitates, fled. But in June federal agents tracked him to a bunker in Arkansas and killed him.

His death became a rallying cry for the extreme right and led to a plot to blow up the Alfred P. Murrah building in Oklahoma City — a plot that fizzled more than a decade before Timothy McVeigh's tragic success.

At the heart of the scheme was a self proclaimed prophet named Jim Ellison, who considered himself a descendant of biblical King David.

Ellison led a militant group called the Covenant, Sword and Arm of the Lord — the CSA—which anointed him "King James of the Ozarks."

At his isolated 224-acre compound on Bull Shoals Lake in Arkansas, Ellison had built a paramilitary training facility and survivalist school, accepting clients from all over the country.

Years later, he became a government witness, and this story of the first plot to destroy the Murrah building comes from court files and an interview with his federal handler, assistant U. S. Attorney Steven Snyder.

After Kahl's death, Ellison attended the annual Aryan World Congress in Idaho. There the racial right groped for ways to retaliate against the government. One idea: Attack federal buildings. In October 1983, Richard Wayne Snell, a member of CSA asked Ellison if "in his opinion would it be practical to blow up a federal building in Oklahoma City, or possibly a federal building in Dallas or Forth Worth, Texas."

Ellison and a top lieutenant traveled to Oklahoma City to scout it out and posing as maintenance workers in brown uniforms, walked through the Murrah building.

Next, Ellison designed a remote controlled bomb and asked CSA's skilled machinists to put it together. But when the device accidentally blew up and injured a worker, the King of the Ozarks took it as a sign from God to abandon the project.

Snell's lust for destruction would not be deterred, though.

In November, he and the man who had helped Ellison case the Murrah Building tried to bomb a natural gas pipeline over the Red River near Hope, Ark., and an electrical transmission line in Fort Smith, Ark.

A few days later, Snell and two other CSA members robbed a pawnshop in Texarkana, Ark. Snell killed the owner, William Stumpp, later saying he thought the man was Jewish.

Then, on June 30, 1984, Snell killed a black Arkansas state trooper who had pulled him over. Police tracked Snell to Broken Bow, Okla., where he was shot and arrested.

Eventually Snell was sentenced to death for the Stumpp murder.

In the meantime, the CSA compound was raided by the FBI on April 19, 1985 — 10 years to the day before the Oklahoma City bombing.

Ellison was arrested along with several fugitive members of The Order, another white supremacist gang, which had staged a brief but intense crime spree in 1983 and 1984, killing Jewish radio talk show host Alan Berg in Denver and robbing more than \$4 million from banks and armored cars.

Ellison served just under 10-years in prison. When he was released, he went to Elohim City, Okla., another radical-right compound, and married one of the granddaughters of the leader, the Rev. Robert Millar.

Meanwhile, Snell's execution date approached and he predicts there would be an explosion on the day he died.

He was right.

On April 19, 1995, just hours before the Oklahoma City bombing, the state of Arkansas killed Snell by lethal injection. Millar claimed his body and buried it at Elohim City.