

# **Howe Acquitted in Bomb Case**

Jury Finds Former Informant Innocent on All Counts

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By David Harper

Former federal informant Carol Howe was found innocent of all charges late Friday night after 51/2 hours of deliberations by a federal jury in Tulsa. Howe, 26, had been charged with conspiracy, willfully making a bomb threat and possessing what a grand jury claimed was a potential pipe bomb.

"I am thrilled that justice has been served in this case," Howe said after the verdict was read at 10:30 p.m. Friday. Howe said she plans to go back to college and would ultimately like to become a lawyer.

Howe's lawyer, Clark O. Brewster, ridiculed the government's case during his closing argument, saying that prosecutors should be "ashamed of themselves" for bringing such a "weak" case.

Brewster pointed out to the jury on Friday how much time the prosecution spent during the case on uncharged acts, such as Howe's possession of legal firearms and her possession of far-rightwing literature, much of which was collected during the serving of her informant duties for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.

Brewster said the government tried to "smear" his client to compensate for the lack of evidence against her. Brewster theorized that Howe was charged, along with the now-convicted James Dodson Viefhaus Jr., because the government decided "we don't like her anymore. We don't like her for what she said or what she may say. Let's make her a convicted felon."

Brewster asked the jury: "How can the government look you in the face and ask you to convict her?"

Howe testified earlier Friday that she told the ATF in the fall of 1994 - while she was working as a federal informant at the white-separatist compound known as Elohim City - that she had heard talk of something "apocalyptic" that was brewing on the horizon in the spring of 1995.

On April 19, 1995, a bomb exploded at Oklahoma City's Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, killing 168 people.

Howe said she told the ATF that federal buildings were being threatened by people at Elohim City, though she said Friday that she never mentioned the Murrah Building by name because "I had never heard of the Murrah Building."

The charges against Howe in Tulsa sprung from an answering machine message that was emanating from the residence Howe was sharing with Viefhaus.

Several minutes into the message, Viefhaus said "a letter from a high-ranking revolutionary commander has been written and received demanding that action be taken against the government by all white warriors by Dec. 15, 1996, and if this action is not taken bombs will be activated in 15 major preselected U.S. cities."

FBI Agent Pete Rickel had testified during the Viefhaus trial that "the high ranking revolutionary commander" was convicted bomb conspirator Willie Ray Lampley. Lampley was convicted last year in federal court in Muskogee and is serving an 11 1/2-year sentence at a federal prison in Illinois.

FBI agent Josh Nixon had testified that when he interviewed Howe on Dec. 13, she said she tried to talk Viefhaus out of including the reference to 15 bombs on the Dec. 8 answering machine tape but that he did it anyway.

Brewster said charging Howe with making a so-called bomb threat was "outrageous."

"An old man in prison (Lampley) who thinks he's a prophet makes some statement that Carol didn't believe and that she didn't want on (the tape)," Brewster said. "She didn't make a phone call, didn't say a word."

Prosecutors alleged that they found the pipe bomb at the residence Howe and Viefhaus shared after a search warrant was executed there.

But Brewster maintained that most of the items were collected by Howe during her days as an informant and that others were items used in the legal use of firearms, camping activities and even hair care and vegetable preservation. Brewster's reaction seemed to be somewhere between rage and hearty amusement after Assistant U.S. Attorney Neil Kirkpatrick said something that Brewster interpreted to mean that it was OK to have items such as gunpowder and hobby fuse in one's home as long as they weren't near each other.

"You've got to make sure that you don't have certain things in the same room now?" Brewster asked incredulously. "Gee, I guess if I go to a plumbing store and buy some pipe, I better go home and put it away before I go to a hobby store and buy some green fuse. Otherwise I might have a nonregistered destructive device in my car. I sure better not put them in the same black box."

Howe again denied Friday that she even knew how to open the black box in which many of the alleged pipe bomb elements were found.

Howe also said Friday that she felt "embarrassed" and "humiliated" when jurors and others in the sometimes packed courtroom listened to audiotapes during the trial in which Howe spewed racist statements.

Howe said those Aryan Intelligence Network tapes, her establishment with Viefhaus of the neo-Nazi National Socialist Alliance, and even her revolutionary persona as "Freya"

were all part of the cover she was forced to assume after the FBI leaked her status as an informant in January 1996.

Howe claimed that in March 1996 ATF agent Angela Graham routed her to the FBI's Rickel for protection after the disclosure to Timothy McVeigh's defense team. McVeigh was later convicted in the Oklahoma City bombing.

Rickel said during the trial that his suggestion - if Howe wanted protection - was to call back the ATF.

During testimony Friday, Howe's father, Bob Howe, read aloud from a letter his daughter had left in a sealed envelope with a friend. The letter was to be given to Howe's family if she were ever forced into the witness-relocation program because of her informant duties.

Howe wrote then that serving as an informant was an opportunity to "do something for someone else."

The government had claimed that Howe was deactivated as an informant in March 1995 and then was only briefly reactivated for a three-day trip to Elohim City right after the Oklahoma City bombing.

Prosecutors claimed that there was some sort of agreement between Howe and Graham that Howe would not do any more informant work after June 1995 and that Howe was only listed as an "active informant" until December 1996 because deactivating her again would have meant that records relating to the Oklahoma City bombing investigation would have been destroyed.

However, no evidence was presented that would have shown why deactivating Howe would have meant that records would have been destroyed. The government admitted that Howe was definitely deactivated Dec. 18, 1996.

Whether that means any records of the Oklahoma City bombing investigation have been shredded remains unclear. Howe said that if she was ever deactivated she was certainly never told about such a move.

At the conclusion of his closing argument, an exasperated Brewster summed up the government's case and its version of who Carol Howe is and said, "This is wrong."

Apparently, the jury agreed.