

Murder Trial Set to Begin - 2 White Supremacists May Face Death Penalty

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A few years ago, a band of young white men set out to overthrow the U.S. government and establish the Aryan Peoples Republic in the Pacific Northwest, federal prosecutors say.

They allegedly planned to perpetuate their nation through polygamy, and only their kind would be allowed - no blacks, no Asians, no Hispanics, no Jews.

On the way, they stockpiled military--style weapons and robbed and killed several people, including an Arkansas couple and their 8-year-old daughter, the government says.

On Monday, Chevie Kehoe, 26, of Colville, Wash., and Danny Lee, 26, of Yukon, Okla., will go on trial in Little Rock in a five-count indictment alleging racketeering, conspiracy and murder. The trial could last three or four months. If convicted, the two men could be sentenced to death.

Neither prosecutors nor defense attorneys were talking about the case last week because of a gag order. It's possible, though, that the trial could include damning testimony from Mr. Kehoe's father, Kirby, and his younger brother, Cheyne. Both have described Chevie as the instigator of most of the trouble.

Chevie Kehoe, the eldest of eight Kehoe boys, associated himself years ago with the Christian Identity, a white supremacist movement. To his local newspaper in Colville, he wrote: "We are in the schools, government, law enforcement, health and everywhere you look. Someone's scared and it is not us. . . . We are not afraid to die."

According to prosecutors, Chevie Kehoe gave the orders and Mr. Lee carried them out. Prosecutors say they were linked to bank robberies throughout the Midwest; gun trafficking in Arkansas, Oklahoma and Washington state; a 1996 bombing at City Hall in Spokane, Wash.; a 1997 shootout with Ohio police; and the slayings of at least six people.

On Feb. 15, 1997, Chevie and Cheyne Kehoe gained notoriety after a shootout with an Ohio law officer was caught on a patrol car camera and broadcast across the country.

The shootout began after their vehicle was stopped for having expired Washington state license plates. No officers were hurt, but a passer-by was wounded by a bullet fragment.

The brothers were indicted by an Ohio grand jury, and a nationwide manhunt began. Four months later, Cheyne Kehoe turned himself in and told police where to find his brother in Utah.

Cheyne Kehoe, 22, who also is from Colville, Wash., was convicted last year in the Ohio case of attempted murder, felonious assault and carrying a concealed weapon. He was sentenced to 241/2 years in state prison.

He said at the time that he feared his older brother, that Chevie Kehoe wanted to kill their parents to get their father's gun collection, and that Chevie wanted to rob an armored car. He also said his brother was involved in the bombing of a federal building.

Chevie Kehoe and convicted bomber Timothy McVeigh have been linked to Elohim City in Oklahoma, a white separatist community. But U.S. Attorney Paula Casey has said there is no connection between Mr. Kehoe's group and the bombing of the Oklahoma City federal building.

In Ohio, Chevie Kehoe pleaded guilty Feb. 20, 1998, to attempted murder of a police officer, felonious assault and carrying a concealed weapon. The judge deferred sentencing until the Arkansas case is resolved.

In the Arkansas case, Mr. Kehoe and Mr. Lee are accused of killing gun dealer William Mueller, 52; his wife, Nancy Mueller, 28, and her 8-year-old daughter, Sarah Elizabeth Powell. They allegedly robbed the Muellers of weapons to support their cause.

The Tilly, Ark., family were last seen Jan. 9, 1996. Their decomposed bodies were found months later in the Illinois Bayou near Russellville. They had plastic bags duct-taped over their heads and rocks duct-taped to their bodies, and they were handcuffed.

Authorities say paint fragments recovered from the duct tape matched paint samples from a pickup truck driven in Yukon, Okla., by Chevie Kehoe and Mr. Lee.

According to prosecutors, Chevie Kehoe is tied to other slayings, including the 1995 death of Jeremy Scott in Idaho and the presumed death in 1996 of Jon Cox of Sacramento, Calif. Mr. Cox's body has never been found. Officials considered Mr. Scott, 23, and Mr. Cox, 25, white supremacists.

Faron Earl Lovelace of Sandpoint, Idaho, an unindicted conspirator, was convicted in 1997 of Mr. Scott's murder and sentenced to death in Idaho. Prosecutors say Chevie Kehoe helped bury Mr. Scott.