

Justice Department Wants to Destroy Possible OKC Evidence

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By J.D. Cash

An inmate in federal custody filed a response to a motion with a federal judge, warning that a storehouse of firearms and bombmaking material the government wants to destroy, includes potential evidence in the Terry Nichols' trial in Oklahoma and could also be linked to a triple-homicide in Arkansas, the McCurtain Daily Gazette has learned.

The government's application for destruction of this material comes after this newspaper filed a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) appeal for the material.

The appeal asked lawyers for the Justice Department to order the FBI to provide photographs of bomb-making materials and other items seized from a terrorist group that operated out of eastern Oklahoma, Kansas and Ohio.

Peter Kevin Langan is the inmate trying to halt the government's plan to destroy the potential evidence. Langan is incarcerated in a federal correctional institute in Florence, Col. The 43-year-old is serving a life-sentence on bank robbery and weapons convictions.

Pete Langan after being released from the hospital. An FBI SWAT team fired 47 rounds at Langan as he sat in his van in front of the gang's "safe house" in Columbus, Ohio, January 18, 1996. Only three rounds grazed the bank robber, including a ricochet, near his eye.

In the early-90's, Langan helped found a terrorist cell modeled after the Irish Republican Army. Dubbed the Aryan Republican Army (ARA), gang members frequented an eastern Oklahoma Christian Identity compound called Elohim City, as well as "safe houses" in Kansas and Ohio.

Beginning with a bank heist in Ames, Iowa on Jan. 25, 1994, the gang's crime spree included 22 banks in seven states across the Midwest. The FBI estimates at least \$250,000 was stolen.

Wearing makeup, wigs, and often speaking in foreign languages, the men stormed small banks, grabbing what was in teller's drawers and were gone in less than two minutes. Often they would leave a fake bomb behind to slow investigators.

Without firing a shot, the ARA's bank robbery record approached the legendary James' Gang and was featured on America's Most Wanted.

The FBI says some of the money stolen by the ARA funded far-right groups involved in terrorist activities.

Langan demonstrates hand grenade in video seized by FBI after his arrest. Created as recruiting tool to attract new members and incite violence against the government, gang members made the 2-hour film in January of '95 and distributed it to far-right groups around the US.

Secrets In A Basement?

Langan's filing was precipitated by a motion filed last month by federal prosecutors in Columbus, Ohio asking the trial judge in Langan's case to allow them to destroy property seized in connection with the ARA's criminal activities. Prosecutors acknowledge none of this potential evidence was used in any criminal trial.

Five years ago, the FBI stored evidence of these terrorists' various plots in the basement of a federal building in Columbus. The public has never seen any of it.

In Langan's five-page response, the inmate points out that some of the material the government wants to destroy could be relevant to a future trial of Nichols in Oklahoma and additional prosecutions in the Mueller family murder case in Arkansas - murders, Langan hints, that involved ARA gang members.

Interviewed by telephone, Langan said he believes that once the materials are destroyed, he will have lost his best bargaining chips for any immunity deal with federal prosecutors. He is seeking a plea bargain that would allow him to swap the names of persons who helped Timothy McVeigh bomb the federal building in Oklahoma City for a sharp reduction in his own sentence.

It's obviously a high-risk gamble that could snare him, as well.

Independently, the Gazette obtained an itemized inventory of the materials the government now wants to destroy.

Items listed include a large cache of weapons, fake ID's, explosive devices such as pipe bombs and grenades, bomb-making components, disguises, fake US Marshall badges and ID's, shirts and ball-caps with FBI and ATF logos, KKK and Aryan Nation material, radio scanners, a substantial inventory of blank birth certificates and driver license forms, and "how to" books on terrorist tactics.

The Gazette has also obtained a page from a small notebook the FBI found in the pant pocket of Richard Guthrie, an ex-Navy SEAL turned Aryan Nation's soldier.

Guthrie, dead now, was described by former associates as a deranged, cold-blooded killer who played a central role in the ARA's criminal activities.

Guthrie's notes list several contacts and phone numbers. On one critical page appears the address of a parking lot only two blocks north of the where the Murrah federal building once stood. Next to the address is the name: Dennis Mahon, the only person who refused to testify before a grand jury that looked into the Oklahoma City bombing, citing his Fifth Amendment rights.

Mahon is currently a member of California white supremacist Tom Metzger's neo-Nazi gang, White Area Resistance (WAR).

In August 1994 the Tulsa office of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (BATF) opened an investigation into Mahon and WAR.

Their informant, Carol Howe, told her two BATF handlers, David E. Roberts and case agent Angela Finley Graham, that Mahon and fellow extremist Andreas Strassmeir were casing federal buildings in Oklahoma with the idea of blowing them up.

Records obtained from other law enforcement agencies corroborate evidence of an ATF plan to raid Elohim City and make arrests.

But six weeks before the OKC bombing, those plans were blocked by FBI Special-Agent-in-Charge of the Oklahoma City office, Bob Ricks.

Howe's BATF file indicates US Attorney Steve Lewis, in Tulsa, was also involved with Roberts during negotiations that eventually scrubbed the operation.

Langan to Name Names

Langan also made this chilling observation in his filing: "Persons who cooperated with the government as witnesses in my case were involved in multiple murders and conspiracy to commit multiple murders ... crimes that were known to the United States government but concealed from the defendant and the public."

Langan says he is in the process of making a "proffer," a legal maneuver allowing immunized testimony in a criminal trial. He told the Gazette that if subpoenaed and given immunity, he would testify at Nichols' trial.

The notion that Langan might be able deal himself out of prison, or at least into a reduced sentence, is not that far-fetched.

In 1993 the Secret Service hired Langan as an undercover informant. The deal bought Langan a ticket out of jail in Georgia, where he faced a 20-year sentence for robbery.

Terrorists' Storehouse Part Of Gazette's FOIA Requests

Columbus prosecutors admit there is a large amount of evidence covered in their destruction order request.

In the basement of the Columbus federal courthouse is a room measuring 15 x 20-feet with 15-foot height ceilings, prosecutors' reveal.

"The storage room is stacked almost ceiling-high ...with weapons, clothing, disguises worn, identities used, or tools used to rob banks; false-identity making equipment;

bomb-making equipment; and instructional materials on conducting terrorist activities," records say.

A year ago, the Gazette obtained a privacy waiver from Langan. With this waiver, the newspaper submitted several requests under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) for copies of specific items the government took from Langan's car, storage lockers and house. The FBI responded to the requests, saying they had no record of ever having such evidence.

Based upon the brief inventory the Department of Justice submitted to the court in their motion, the materials the government wants permission to destroy are identical to the items this newspaper on which the newspaper asked copies and photographs.

The Gazette has an appeal pending at the Department of Justice, asking for an order requiring the FBI to conduct a competent search and make copies and photographs available of some of the ARA property seized.

Trail Leads to Elohim City

During the telephone interview, Langan said, he "strongly suspects" one of the ARA's foot soldiers - former Elohim City resident, Kevin McCarthy - obtained blasting caps from McVeigh. Langan hinted they were the same ones used in the OKC bombing.

Langan said the FBI seized those blasting caps at the Columbus "safe house," The inmate suggested a comparison with those McVeigh stole from a Marion, Kan. blasting site with those found by the FBI.

The Gazette has also learned the FBI located an Arkansas driver's license in a storage locker the gang rented in Shawnee Mission, Kan. The license carries the name, "Robert Miller." This is the same name used as an alias for two decades by gun dealer Roger Moore, formerly of Royal, Ark.

A central theme of the 1997 bombing trials in Denver was that Nichols perpetrated the robbery of Roger Moore to finance the Oklahoma City attack. A substantial number of guns belonging to the Arkansas collector were found in Nichols' Kansas residence and ex-army pal Mike Fortier's trailer in Kingman, Ariz.

But if evidence found in ARA storage lockers matches with the Arkansas gun robbery, Nichols' lawyers could argue the robbery and the bombing were really ARA crimes.

Langan also indicated an interest in supplying Arkansas authorities with information about former gang members' roles in the murder of gun dealers Bill Mueller, 52, and wife Nancy, 28, along with Nancy Mueller's 8-year-old daughter, Sarah Powell.

In early January 1996, the Mueller family was surprised in their Tilly, Ark. home by armed assailants dressed as BATF agents. Six months later, their bodies were recovered from a bayou north of Russellville.

It would be three more years before a pair neo-Nazi skinheads with ties to Elohim City, Chevie Kehoe and Danny Lee, were convicted for the brutal crimes. The men had been part of another terrorist cell operating out of Elohim City - the Aryan People's Republic.

Some of the Muellers' friends still believe robbery was only one of the motives for the homicides. Several have suggested that the family was singled out for the particularly brutal execution because of what they knew about the Oklahoma City bombing.

A criminal investigator in Arkansas said the BATF and FBI learned Mueller had close ties to a militia group in western Arkansas, once frequented by Mahon and other radicals from Elohim City.

Indeed, Mueller's wife had been raised at an Identity compound in Arkansas and the couple also were known to have visited Elohim City.

Reporter Gene Worgis interviewed Mueller and his wife only days before they disappeared.

Worgis later wrote that the couple told him they were concerned that Elohim City roommates Andreas Strassmeir and Mike Brescia were going to harm them. Worgis photographed the couple at the gun show and published a story about their fears in a newsletter.

Strassmeir was never interviewed by the authorities about the Mueller murders. He crossed the Mexican border and returned to Germany the same week the Muellers' disappeared. That same month this reporter found Brescia hiding at the Pennsylvania residence of Mark Thomas, an Aryan Nation leader and fellow ARA member who subsequently pled guilty for roles in the bank robbery conspiracy.

Brescia also pleaded guilty to bank robbery and conspiracy charges.

Last March, Brescia and Kevin McCarthy were released from federal custody.

Today, only Langan, Mark Thomas, and former Elohim City resident, Scott Anthony Stedeford, are serving time for ARA-related crimes.

Richard Guthrie, the co-founder of the ARA, died in July 1996. The Covington, Ken., coroner ruled the cause of the death suicide by hanging.

A book manuscript the prisoner left behind listed the name of the gang's getaway driver as: "Tim, aka, Speedie."

The federal court in Columbus has not ruled on the government's motion or Langan's response.