

National media barred from interviewing inmates about OKC bombing

5/1/2003

By J.D. Cash

McCurtain Gazette

The U.S. Bureau of Prisons has barred CBS News anchor Dan Rather and Associated Press reporter John Solomon from jailhouse interviews with an inmate believed to have important information about the 1995 bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City.

That inmate, Peter Kevin Langan Jr., is serving a prison sentence of life plus 35 years for crimes stemming from a string of 22 bank robberies committed in seven Midwestern states during the early and mid-90s.

Langan was associated with a neo-Nazi bank robbery gang called the Aryan Republican Army (ARA).

On Jan. 18, 1996, the ARA leader was arrested in Columbus, Ohio after federal agents fired approximately 48 rounds into a van in which the bank robbery suspect was seated.

Langan survived the incident with minor injuries and faced trial the following year.

Several members of the gang were also arrested for roles in the crime spree and some eventually admitted being part of a paramilitary arm of the Aryan Nation - a far-flung white supremacist group.

Some members also confirmed that the goal of the ARA robbery cell was to raise cash through bank robberies and use the proceeds to finance a reign of terror throughout the United States.

ARA members have also claimed they followed a religious philosophy called Christian Identity.

Some in the group have since disclosed in court documents and testimony that the gang's blueprint for action came directly from the pages of *The Turner Diaries*, the same racist diatribe Timothy McVeigh espoused and distributed.

When the A.P. Murrah Federal Building was bombed, several members of the gang lived at Elohim City - a heavily armed and fortified 1,000-acre stronghold of approximately 80 fulltime residents, located near Muldrow, Oklahoma.

Phone records and motel receipts compiled by the FBI indicate that just days before the April 19, 1995, blast, McVeigh was in telephone contact with someone at the Elohim City compound.

Court filing raises interest

Media interest in Langan has swelled since the inmate filed a request for a new trial.

Contained in the lengthy filing, Langan alleges the government overlooked the complicity of certain players in the Oklahoma City terror attack in order to obtain favorable testimony against him and to protect informants working inside the bombing and bank robbery conspiracy.

Tending to support some of these remarkable claims, the inmate provided records of federal investigations and other sources of information to this newspaper.

Langan's former attorney, Kevin Durkin of Westerville, Ohio, has confirmed that the government early on sought information from his client about the Oklahoma City conspiracy, but prosecutors backed away from the deal when Langan asked for guarantees to which U.S. Justice Department officials would not agree.

Saddam yes, Langan no!

The McCurtain Daily Gazette learned that the same week Dan Rather interviewed Iraqi president Saddam Hussein, producers for CBS 60 Minutes II were turned down by the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) for an on-camera interview with inmate Langan.

Upon discovering the subject of the proposed interview was the Oklahoma City bombing, officials at the BOP claimed Rather's presence at the Virginia federal prison where Langan is housed would raise unacceptable "safety and security" issues.

After being informed the interview with the legendary newsman was off, Langan told this newspaper, "Well, I guess that tells you who the government thinks is more dangerous: Saddam Hussein or me!"

Shortly after the CBS denial, the Associated Press also was informed by the BOP that a similar AP request to interview Langan had been turned down.

John Solomon was the reporter for the AP who filed the request for interview with the BOP.

Solomon recently wrote an article illustrating details that linked former members of the ARA with McVeigh, and of a plot to bomb federal installations - allegations and facts clearly at odds with government's official version of the crime.

Solomon's sleuthing also noted that, before the 1995 holocaust struck downtown Oklahoma City, ATF documents established that agents in Tulsa and Dallas were already involved in an investigation at Elohim City and a plan by certain persons there to commit "mass shootings and bombings".

This newspaper earlier reported that the government sought federal arrest warrants from the U.S. attorney in Tulsa for a key subject residing at Elohim City. At the center of the conspiracy was Andreas Strassmeir, ATF documents reflected.

Strassmeir fled the U.S. through Mexico after press reports linked him to McVeigh in early 1996.

Only McVeigh and Terry Nichols have been charged in the bombing that left 168 persons dead.

McVeigh was later found guilty on several counts of first-degree murder and executed in 2001.

Nichols was eventually convicted for conspiracy in the plot and received a life-sentence from the presiding federal judge after the jury deadlocked on a penalty.

On May 5 a hearing is set in Oklahoma City to determine if state prosecutors have adequate evidence to make Nichols face state murder charges in Oklahoma.

Any substantial evidence that members of the ARA were involved in the bombing could muddy the Oklahoma case against Nichols.

Oklahoma case affected

This newspaper revealed last year details contained in a post-bombing FBI memo obtained through the Freedom of Information Act - a memo that clearly linked certain members of the ARA to the tragedy in Oklahoma City.

FBI agents in Washington D.C. acknowledged they had a videotape made by the ARA only weeks before the blast that contained statements from masked members of the bank robbery gang bragging of a coming attack on a federal building that would exact large numbers of casualties.

In 1997 the McCurtain Daily Gazette published a story detailing an FBI affidavit provided by Jennifer McVeigh, wherein Timothy McVeigh's sister admitted laundering money her brother said came from a bank robbery he helped with.

Also certain to play a role in the upcoming Nichols' case is evidence first reported in a series of articles this newspaper published concerning the existence of an undercover paid informant, Carol E. Howe, who repeatedly warned the ATF - before and after the bombing - that subjects at Elohim City were plotting to bomb federal buildings in Oklahoma.

Almost all of the persons named by Howe in those confidential ATF reports obtained by this newspaper were later arrested and jailed for crimes involving murder, bank robbery and other serious offenses.

This newspaper has now learned that the list of persons Langan was prepared to divulge to Rather and Solomon as co-conspirators in the bombing, corroborates much of Howe's undercover work and are persons listed among those she provided authorities names of in pre- and post-bombing interviews.

Nice deals with killers?

Langan writes in his appeal that the government used some of McVeigh's co-conspirators and their own informants to testify against him, but their involvement in the bombing in Oklahoma City was ignored:

"In what was then the largest mass murder in the U.S. - the Oklahoma City bombing - the government covered up evidence linking their witnesses and informants (Kevin McCarthy, Mark Thomas, Andreas Strassmeir and others.)"

The federal filing also claims that a portion of the 4,000 pages of documents the FBI said were misplaced in the Oklahoma City bombing investigation, will eventually link McVeigh to persons the government made special plea arrangements with.

As an example: Langan points out that during his Columbus, Ohio federal trial in 1997 former gang member Kevin McCarthy testified Langan was one of the leaders of ARA and was committed to the overthrow of the federal government.

Indeed, McCarthy's testimony concerning the details of several bank robberies the gang allegedly participated in proved central to the government's case against Langan.

Along with McCarthy, Elohim City roommate Michael Brescia also made a deal to plead guilty.

BOP records show that both men have since been released from federal custody after serving less than five years for bank robbery and other serious offenses.

Referring directly to McCarthy's complicity in the bombing and subsequent deal with the government, Langan now asks the court for permission to hold an

evidentiary hearing so he can obtain evidence linking Mr. McCarthy to blasting caps the FBI seized during their investigation of the ARA.

Langan has told this newspaper that those blasting caps were from the same batch used to construct the bomb that destroyed the federal building in Oklahoma.

The government has declined several requests from this newspaper made through the Freedom of Information Act, for photographs and other documentation concerning blasting caps seized from the ARA.

Another man with an admitted role in the gang, Mark Thomas, is set for release from prison early next year.

Thomas received a deal from prosecutors after agreeing to supply information about the ARA.

Langan now claims Thomas played a central role in the bombing conspiracy and says the government knew that when they arranged the plea deal with the nationally known Aryan Nation leader.

Tending to support those claims: At the time of his arrest, Thomas told the media he had information linking longtime friend Kevin McCarthy to the bombing in Oklahoma City.

Days later a federal prosecutor announced the DoJ reached a deal with Thomas to cooperate and provide information about the ARA.

As for the statements that McCarthy helped McVeigh kill 168 innocents: The prosecutor said Thomas would recant those allegations and there were no links between members of the ARA and Timothy McVeigh, or the bombing in Oklahoma.

However, this newspaper has obtained FBI documents establishing Thomas traveled from Pennsylvania to Elohim City in early April of 1995. And those documents also provide admissions from Thomas that he left the compound some time shortly before the blast in Oklahoma City.

FBI documents also reveal that Thomas arrived at his farm in southern Pennsylvania days later, telling friends he supported the bombing as revenge for Waco.

The McCurtain Daily Gazette also obtained an FBI statement from a former girlfriend of Thomas, alluding to a direct hand in the mass-murder by the father of her child.

The FBI report of investigation states that Thomas bragged to the woman in 1994 that he was involved in a violent plan to exact revenge over the 1993 Waco incident - a plan that would kill a large number of people. In two separate interviews this newspaper has gained copies of reports that the woman told agents she was convinced Thomas and his men were behind the Oklahoma City bombing.

Strassmeir key to events

For several months prior to the bombing ATF agents collected evidence of a plan at Elohim City to use neo-Nazi skinheads from around the United States to carry out a widespread campaign of bombings and assassinations in order to overthrow the U.S. government.

No legal action was taken against Andreas Strassmeir, who sources for this newspaper and official documents indicate was operating in this country with diplomatic immunity and cooperation of U.S. federal agents.

Bob Ricks was the agent in charge of the FBI office in Oklahoma City in April 1995 and has since admitted that he intervened with the U.S. Attorney in Tulsa to stop the ATF's planned raid at Elohim City and arrest of Andreas Strassmeir.

Witnesses have told this newspaper that very shortly after the bombing, then-FBI Director Louis Freeh visited Oklahoma City and in a heated closed-door exchange that several agents could hear, Freeh ordered Ricks to: "Find new employment!"

Then Gov. Frank Keating immediately named Ricks to head the Department of Public Safety - a job that Ricks still holds.