

Federal Judge rules it's a fact: McVeigh was monitored by informants in wider conspiracy

McCurtain Daily Gazette

March 30th, 2006 | by J.D .Cash and Roger Charles

A U.S. district court judge in Salt Lake City, Utah, yesterday, issued a stunning decision that appears to bolster claims that executed bomber, Timothy McVeigh, was supported by various militia groups and that the government had an informant inside the bombing conspiracy.

The case in Utah grew out of a dispute between civil attorney, Jesse Trentadue and the Oklahoma City FBI over documents requested under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

For over a decade, Salt Lake City attorney, Jesse Trentadue, has been searching for documents that might shed light on the death of his brother at the Federal Transfer Center in Oklahoma City, in August of 1995.

In the course of this investigation, Trentadue has received “tips” from various sources, including one allegedly from a source close to Tim McVeigh, before his execution. That source said that McVeigh told him that Kenneth Trentadue was beaten, tortured and murdered because the FBI mistakenly believed he was linked to a group of bank bandits that considerable evidence now suggests, assisted Tim McVeigh in the plot to bomb the Oklahoma federal building.

The FOIA suit began after heavily redacted documents obtained by this newspaper, from an FBI whistleblower, confirmed McVeigh’s links to Elohim City and informants working for the Southern Poverty Law Center that were present at the paramilitary compound on April 17, 1995, when McVeigh called the camp looking for German-national Andreas Strassmeir and additional help in the bombing.

While heavily redacted that Jan. 4, 1996 teletype from FBI Director Louis Freeh, to a select group of FBI offices, contained information appearing to link Strassmeir to McVeigh and the FBI’s knowledge that Strassmeir was planning to flee the country soon.

Inexplicably, the FBI did not go to the residence where the memo said Strassmeir was living in Black Mountain, N.C. and detain the individual for questioning about the bombing. Instead, Strassmeir, with the help of his Black Mountain, N.C. attorney, Kirk Lyons and former CIA pilot Dave Holloway, was able to slip across the Mexican border a few days after the teletype was issued.

Since the discovery of this heavily redacted document linking the SPLC, Elohim City and Strassmeir, to McVeigh and the bombing conspiracy, the FBI has since

produced 17 additional documents for Trentadue. However, key sections of those documents were also heavily redacted.

Seeking to have the FBI provided un-redacted copies of these additional documents, Trentadue has claimed the FBI has a duty to make a full disclosure of who their informants and suspects in the bombing were, because the national interest in the Oklahoma City bombing, far outweighs any privacy interests those informants and suspects may have had.

In order to determine the validity of the claims made by both sides, the FBI was ordered in November to turn over un-redacted copies of all the documents at issue for the judge to examine “in chambers.”

After reviewing the documents, Kimball singled out a teletype issued by the FBI, only six days after the blast.

“Plaintiff points out the fact that this document indicates there was an undercover operative in with Timothy McVeigh and members of the various militia groups who aided and supported McVeigh, but plaintiff wonders why, given the subject matter, there are no earlier records produced by the FBI.”

Contacted after the ruling was issued, Trentadue told this newspaper that he is heartened by the language the judge used here, which clearly indicates the un-redacted documents convinced the court that McVeigh had accomplices that have not been charged and the government had at least one informant within the cabal.

“The judge concurs with my allegations that McVeigh was supported by this bank robbery group at Elohim City and that the government was inside that group with at least one informant.”

The court though, sided with the FBI in refusing to allow the release of the names of the other suspects or their informants that provided them with information about the conspiracy.

In his 22-page ruling, Kimball said, “(FOIA) Exemption 7D protects records of information compiled for law enforcement purposes which could reasonably be expected to disclose the identity of a confidential source or information furnished by a confidential source.”

Regarding the FBI’s reluctance to provide the information sought by Trentadue, Kimball wrote, “It is troubling that so many of the documents produced by the FBI refer to FD-302s (investigation leads) that were or should have been prepared, and the disclosed documents also refer to other attachments that at one time appear to have accompanied the document, yet these documents have not been produced. While the FBI’s failure to discover documents is not

necessarily an indication of bad faith, it is puzzling that *so many* documents could be referenced but not produced.”

Focusing on Morris Dees and the organization he co-founded, the SPLC, the judge ordered the FBI to conduct additional record searches for documents containing the names of Morris Dees, the SPLC and several radical members of the far-right that frequented Elohim City and that have been linked in the past to McVeigh.

Encouraging the FBI to fully cooperate with attorney Trentadue in his dogged search for the truth around his brother’s murder, Kimball warned the agency: “It appears likely, however, that the FBI has not seen the last FOIA request from Plaintiff.”

One senior, retired FBI agent who read only the paragraph quoted above from the judge’s ruling said that the judge’s finding that there was an informant and a broader conspiracy than heretofore admitted by the government makes even more inexplicable the FBI headquarters’ shutting down all investigations into the Elohim City connection to OKBOMB.

He further stated that it would be “a huge scandal” if it is ever proven that Strassmeir’s name is among those currently withheld as having been guaranteed confidentiality as an informant.