

Two ATF arrests awaken theories of conspiracy

By Jerry Seper, The Washington Times | Friday, June 26, 2009

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) agents arrested two suspected white supremacists Thursday after a raid at a northern Illinois home, during which agents seized assault weapons, hundreds of rounds of ammunition and purportedly racist materials.

Twin brothers Dennis and Daniel Mahon, 59, were taken into custody by agents on firearms violations after arrest and search warrants were served at the Davis Junction, Ill., home.

Dennis Mahon was frequently mentioned as a possible suspect but never charged in connection with the April 19, 1995, bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City that killed 168 people, including 19 children.

ATF officials said the brothers were the subject of a sealed federal grand jury indictment handed up by a U.S. District Court in Arizona. They were taken to the Ogle County sheriff's office and are expected to be transferred later to the custody of the U.S. Marshal's office.

Jesse Trentadue, a Salt Lake City lawyer who doggedly has sought to determine whether there was a conspiracy in the Oklahoma City bombing, called the arrest "surprising," saying in a Thursday telephone interview that the arrests could provide further answers in the case.

His quest began after his brother, Kenneth, died while in custody in Oklahoma City in August 1995. The death initially was declared a suicide by prison officials, but the family later discovered numerous injuries when preparing the body for burial. The family was awarded more than \$1 million in a wrongful-death lawsuit against the government.

Mr. Trentadue has since sought to show a connection between his brother's death and the bombing conspiracy. In court papers, he said Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh met with Dennis Mahon in April 1994 and later traveled to Elohim City, Okla., for "talk, planning and target practice."

Stephen Jones, the Oklahoma lawyer who represented McVeigh and also thought there was a conspiracy, was not available Thursday for comment.

During the McVeigh trial, Carol Elizabeth Howe, an ATF informant who infiltrated Oklahoma's violent subculture of white separatism in the months before the explosion, warned of plans to bomb a federal institution and insisted the plot involved more than just McVeigh and Terry Nichols, the two men convicted in the case.

During her court testimony, Miss Howe said she called the Dial-a-Racist hot line in 1994 and met the leader of the White Aryan Resistance, whom she described as being Dennis Mahon. Later, she said Mr. Mahon raped her and she filed a police report.

The filing caught the attention of ATF Agent Angela Finley-Graham, who asked Miss Howe to go undercover. Citing a "personal vendetta" against Mr. Mahon, Miss Howe agreed to drop the complaint and take notes on his movements and contacts.

For the next six months, court testimony shows, she took notes and taped conversations on how to build grenades and mix napalm. She said she went with Mr. Mahon to Elohim City, a white-supremacist enclave run by the Rev. Robert Millar, who advocated armed resistance against the federal government.

According to Miss Howe's testimony, Mr. Mahon and Andreas Strassmeir, a German in charge of security at Elohim City, discussed blowing up federal buildings in Oklahoma City, Tulsa and Texas. She even wrote "Morrow building" in her notes in an apparent reference to the Murrah building.

She also said she saw a man who looked like McVeigh with Mr. Strassmeir at Elohim City in July 1994. Mr. Mahon called the man "Tim Tuttle," she said, which she later found was a common McVeigh alias. Phone records later showed that McVeigh called Elohim City just weeks before the bombing.

During the trial, attorneys for McVeigh linked right-wing groups to anti-government violence, including the bomb attack on the Murrah building. In papers filed with the 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, defense attorneys said former residents of the white-supremacist compound of Elohim City "had engaged in armed confrontation with the federal government ... including neo-Nazis with training manuals on how to make ammonium-nitrate bombs."

Mr. Jones said Elohim City inhabitants included members of the Aryan Nations and the Posse Comitatus, and Dennis Mahon. Defense attorneys also noted that the bombing occurred the same day as the execution in Arkansas of white supremacist Richard Wayne Snell, who in 1983 was involved in a plot to blow up the Murrah building.

"The defense believes that there is credible evidence that a conspiracy to bomb federal property, very possibly the Murrah building, is centered in Elohim City," Mr. Jones said in the papers.

The FBI examined nearly 10,000 telephone calls to or from right-wing anti-government figures, including three phone numbers at Elohim City.