

Secret Police Murder and Cover-Up

Transcript of the Lew Rockwell Show

Episode 253

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Guest: Jesse Trentadue

ROCKWELL: Good morning. This is the Lew Rockwell Show. And it's great to have as our guest this morning Mr. Jesse Trentadue. Jesse is a lawyer in Salt Lake City, whose brother, Kenneth, was tortured and murdered by federal agents in a federal prison because of a case of mistaken identity involving the Oklahoma City bombing. This happened in 1995. And ever since 1995, Jesse has been an implacable pursuer of justice to an extraordinary extent, and I must say with extraordinary success against the FBI and other federal agencies trying to get the truth about what happened to his brother, and also the truth, as he's gone more and more into it, about what happened in Oklahoma City to the Murrah Building.

So, Jesse, this is a fascinating story. It's a horrific story. All I can say is, please, tell it to us.

TRENTADUE: Well, thank you for having me on.

I think one of the things I would want to say first to your audience is they will – when they hear me tell this story, they will think it's incredible. But I want to emphasize that the story is based upon, in large part, FBI documents. So it's not just me giving my version of what I think the facts are. The facts are coming out of documents that I obtained from the FBI, and only after an incredible fight over 17 years.

The whole story starts in August of 1995, when my brother, Kenneth, was picked up on an alleged parole violation and sent to Oklahoma City to a federal facility. And this was during the time I believe of the grand jury proceedings against Timothy McVeigh. My brother arrives in Oklahoma City on a Friday night. He supposedly commits suicide two days later. And that's where it started.

My brother had been in the military during the Vietnam War. He was in the Army. And like so many boys at that time, he had come out with an addiction to heroin. He robbed a bank to support his addiction. He was caught. He pled guilty and went to jail. He's released from prison and he had a probation officer who put a "no beer drinking" condition on his parole. I helped him fight that, and we lost. And he basically told his parole officer to go to hell, that he was going to drink beer and that was the end of the story. That was in the late 1980s. Well, in 1995, he is coming across the border in San Diego, California, from visiting friends and family – his wife is Hispanic – in Baja California. He's picked up and sent to Oklahoma City. And as I said, he's dead two days later.

It was an incredible fight just to get his body released. The FBI and the federal government had called my mother and asked for permission to have his body cremated. We refused. We later found out that the government had made two attempts with the Oklahoma state medical examiner to have my brother cremated. We received his body home, and I'm own my way to California, Orange County, where my mother lived and his wife and my sister were. And they arrived at the mortuary before I did. When the body arrived, they – he was heavily made up and they removed the makeup and found that he had been beaten head to toe. He had been struck in the skull, in the head. Kenny had received three massive blows to his head that ruptured the skin, the skull. You could see his skull. He was beaten front to back, head to toe, even on the soles of his feet, and his throat had been cut. And the FBI said it was suicide by hanging.

We had a difficult time from the beginning. The crime scene photographs disappeared. The video surveillance camera tapes supposedly didn't exist because the cameras malfunctioned. The log book – books, I should say – that would have shown who had access to my brother disappeared or else the pages were removed from those log books. And it was just a hellacious fight with the FBI to get any information, to get any effort at justice in my brother's murder.

The FBI insisted from the beginning that it was a suicide. In fact, within hours of my brother's death, the government had issued a press release saying it was a suicide. When the medical examiner from the state of Oklahoma attempted to gain access to the cell to do an investigation, he was denied access. And instead, the federal government had the cell cleaned and repainted. And when the medical examiner was finally allowed into the cell six months later, he does a test called luminal, which is designed to detect the presence of blood even after it's been cleaned, the area. And he told me that the cell lit up like a Christmas tree because apparently luminal produces a light effect when there's blood present.

The first inkling that there was a link to the Oklahoma City bombing occurred – I think it was in December of 1995 or January of 1996. And it wasn't a direct link. We had been fighting the FBI constantly throughout this period of time, of six months or so, since my brother's death, and I received a phone call. It was either December, late December or early January of 1996. And those were back in the days when you didn't have Caller I.D. on the telephone so I didn't know where the number came from or who the person was. This person told me, he said, you're brother was killed by the FBI. He died in an interrogation that when wrong. It was a case of mistaken identity. He had been mistaken for a group – or a member of a group of people who were robbing banks to attack the federal government – get the money, the funds to attack the federal government.

About six months later, I was reading in the "Los Angeles Times" a story about a man named Richard Lee Guthrie. Guthrie, according to the story, had belonged to a group called the Midwest Bank Robbery Gang. And they were an anti-government group apparently robbing banks and armored cars to fund their so-

called war against the federal government. And the story said that Guthrie had committed suicide by hanging in federal custody the day before he had promised an interview to the "Los Angeles Times" "that would blow the lid off the Oklahoma City bombing." That was the exact quote.

There was no photograph of Guthrie in the story in the newspaper article. And we continued to fight the government until about the year 2000, I think it was – 2001. It was shortly before Timothy McVeigh was executed. Shortly before he was executed, I received a message from Timothy McVeigh. And McVeigh wanted me to know that he had seen my brother's photograph and heard what happened to him. There was McVeigh's belief that my brother had been murdered by the FBI because they mistook him for Richard Lee Guthrie. I found it curious over the years, thinking back on it, why McVeigh had such an interest apparently in my brother's case. In fact, so much of an interest that he coined the verb "Trentadued," which McVeigh said meant to be murdered by the federal government.

A year or so after McVeigh's execution, I received a telephone call from a man named J.D. Cash. J.D. was a reporter for a small newspaper in eastern Oklahoma. He had had family and friends killed in the Oklahoma City bombing. And J.D. said he wanted to talk to me about my brother, and I said fine. He said, describe your brother. I said, well, he was about 5' 9", dark complected. J.D. said, how much did he weigh. And I said he was about 175 pounds. And J.D. said, what kind of build did he have. I said, well, he was a very powerful man. And J.D. said, well, where was he arrested. And I said he was arrested coming across the boarder from Mexico into San Diego. J.D. said, what was he riding in. I said, well, he was driving his friend's 1986 Chevrolet pick-up truck. J.D. said, did he have any tattoos. I said yes. J.D. said, what kind and where. I said he had a dragon tattoo on his left forearm. J.D. paused a minute and he said to me, are you sitting down. And I said, yes, I'm sitting down. He said, let me tell you some interesting facts. He said, at the time your brother was picked up and murdered, the largest manhunt in American history was being conducted by the FBI for John Doe 2. The description the FBI had circulated for John Doe 2 was white male, powerful upper-body build, 5' 9", approximately 175 to 180 pounds, believed to be in Canada or Mexico, driving a big 1980 Chevrolet pick-up truck, dragon tattoo left forearm.

At that point in time, my family had a motive for my brother's murder. Before that, people would look at my brother's case and say, yes, he was murdered but why would the government do that. Now we had a motive. And the motive was a possible link to the Oklahoma City bombing; that my brother had been mistaken for John Doe 2. And as I began to look into the issue, I found out that Richard Lee Guthrie was a perfect match for the description, just as my brother was. Guthrie was about 5' 9", powerful upper-body build, dark complected, dragon tattoo left forearm.

At that point in time, I started to pursue the FBI for information and documents linking Guthrie and others to the Oklahoma City bombing. I'd focused on the Freedom of Information Act, which is a law Congress passed some years ago that entitles American citizens to government records, agency records, records of the FBI, records of the CIA, records of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms agency. And I'd been helped a lot along the way in this fight, especially with the Freedom of Information Act. The Freedom of Information Act says that citizens could basically have these government documents unless they would interfere – release of the documents would interfere with an on-going criminal investigation, or somehow involve national security. In other words, under the Freedom of Information Act, if the document will compromise a criminal proceeding or jeopardize national security, you can't have it. But other than that, you're pretty much entitled to anything you ask for from the government – the FBI, the Secret Service.

Well, I had been leaked two teletypes from FBI Director Louis Freeh. Mr. Freeh was the director of the FBI during the bombing investigation. These teletypes were sent from FBI headquarters under Freeh's name to various field offices, FBI field offices in the United States. And they essentially said that McVeigh had called several times to a man named Andreas Strassmeir, who was living in a white supremacist compound in eastern Oklahoma called Elohim City. And the purposes of these calls was McVeigh asking Strassmeir for more help to carry out the bombing of the Murrah Building in Oklahoma City. Now, again, it's not me making this up. These teletypes exist. These teletypes are out there now on the Internet.

Strassmeir was a German national. He had been an intelligence officer in the German army. He was in Elohim City as the explosives-and-weapons instructor. So I filed a Freedom of Information Act request, asking for all documents linking the FBI to an undercover operation in Elohim City involving the Oklahoma City bombing. As I've often told people, when they ask me, how could you fight the government of the United States, it's so large, it's so powerful. And I say, I have one advantage, especially when I'm dealing with the FBI. It is a weakness the bureau has. That weakness is it will always lie. The FBI will lie, even when the truth would serve it better. So I knew they would deny these documents exist. And when they came back and told me they don't exist, I filed a lawsuit in federal court here in Salt Lake City, Utah.

And the FBI marches into court and tells the federal judge that there are no documents. I produced those two teletypes. I knew also that when I did that, the FBI would come back and say that they were forged or fraudulent or false. I was ready for them because I had an affidavit from a retired FBI agent, out of headquarters in Washington, D.C., who had been in charge of the bombing investigation early on, and he had given me an affidavit saying those teletypes are legitimate. So when I went back with that affidavit, the federal judge says to the FBI, you go back and you do a manual search and you bring back all of the

documents involving the FBI, Strassmeir, and this undercover operation at Elohim City that's linked to the bombing of Oklahoma City.

Well, the FBI comes back to the judge and they say, Your Honor, we can't turn over those records. If we do, if we release the names of our undercover operatives, it'll put their lives in jeopardy. And the judge said to them, well, you black out the names and you turn the documents over. So they produced about 340 documents linking the FBI to Elohim City, to Strassmeir, and the bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City.

But the earliest document they produced was dated on the afternoon of April 19, 1995, several hours after the bombing. So I go back to the judge and I say, Your Honor, there's no way this undercover operation came into being two hours after the bombing. It had to have been in place years earlier. And to support this claim, I went before the court with a transcript that had been sealed. It was a transcript of a hearing in federal court in Oklahoma that had taken place in April of 1997, and it was a government agent testifying about an undercover operative named Carol Howe who had been working in Elohim City. And Howe reported that she had gone with Strassmeir – and I think perhaps even McVeigh, although it's not clear from the transcript – in the fall of 1994 to scout targets. They apparently were considering several targets in Oklahoma City. And the agent relays this testimony. And at the end of the hearing, the U.S. attorney conducting the hearing – and this hearing in Oklahoma is taking place while the McVeigh trial was going on. The U.S. attorney conducting the hearing jumps up and says, Your Honor, we've got to seal this transcript. And the court says, what do you mean? And the U.S. attorney says, we don't want anything getting out of here that would compromise the McVeigh trial in any way. The defense attorney at that hearing says – I'm quoting from the transcript – "What do you mean by compromised? Do you mean shared with the McVeigh lawyers"? And the judge responds, "Yes, or something that would come up. You know, we have got evidence that the ATF took a trip with somebody that said buildings were going to be blown up in Oklahoma City before it was blown up or something of that nature, and try to connect it with McVeigh in some way or something." That's an exact quote from a federal judge. And he orders the transcript sealed. So here you have the government acknowledging that they had known four months prior to the bombing that it was going to happen, and didn't stop it. And to me, more incredible still is that a federal judge would order that evidence sealed, not made public.

And, again, as I said, people have helped me a lot along the way. And I received a copy of that transcript. So I go back before the judge here in Utah with that transcript. I also went back with evidence that I had obtained from Terry Nichols. I don't know how I was able to do it but I was able to get into the federal prison, called ADMAX, the new Alcatraz in Colorado, and I spent a day and a half with Nichols. Nichols had been tried by the United States government and found guilty of murder but the jury wouldn't give him the death penalty. And the reason was that the jury felt that there were other people involved and couldn't

understand why the Department of Justice wasn't pursuing the other perpetrators. Nichols was next tried by the state of Oklahoma with the same result, guilty but no death penalty for the same reason. Once he had been tried by the federal government and the state of Oklahoma, he could not be subject to another trial and put him in jeopardy of the death penalty.

At that point in time, he writes to then-Attorney General Ashcroft, and he tells Ashcroft, he says, come and see me and I will tell you all about the bombing, who was involved, to what I think was the government's role in the bombing. And in that letter, Nichols – and I'm quoting from it – he says, "I'm not looking for any favors or such. I am simply wanting the full truth to come out. I am willing to disclose publicly all I know, including how I was involved in the Oklahoma City bombing." Now, you would think the attorney general of the United States, whether or not you believe Nichols, you would at least send someone to speak with him, if for no other reason to find out what makes people do these kinds of things. But Ashcroft doesn't send anyone to interview Nichols. Instead, he issues an order that Nichols is to have no contact with the media. And to this day, he's not allowed any contact with the media.

But I was able to get a sworn statement from Nichols that the explosives used to detonate the bomb, which was an explosive called Kenestick, was actually provided by an FBI operative. And I go back before the judge and the judge says to me, he says, what do you want. I said I want to go take Terry Nichol's deposition and make it public. And the judge ordered it. He ordered the government of the United States to produce Nichols for me to take his deposition. Now, you would think the government of the United States and especially the FBI wouldn't be concerned about the truth relating to the Oklahoma City bombing being told, or anything that Nichols had to say. But that wasn't the case. The FBI went immediately to the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals in Denver and got an order reversing the Salt Lake City federal judge, forbidding the deposition from going forward. That was a big set back.

But then, in the course of my war with the FBI, I stumbled across reference in one of the documents they produced to an operation called PATCON, P-A-T-C-O-N. I found out that PATCON was an acronym for Patriot Conspiracy. And the FBI immediately began to back-peddle away from PATCON when I pressed them about what is PATCON. They came back and said, well, it was a small operation in Alabama designed to catch some folks who had stolen night-vision goggles from the military and were selling them. But it looked bigger than that. It looked much bigger than that. When I looked at the documents, I could see there were references to PATCON Group 1, PATCON Group 2, and a whole bunch of PATCON operations all over the United States. And I, over the years, kept pushing and pushing on PATCON, and more and more information started to come out.

But where the PATCON story really took off was last summer. I received a call from a man who told me, he said, I've been reading the information on the Internet about PATCON. He said, you have all the pieces, you just haven't put them together. And I said, what do you mean. He said, you don't see the big picture, and I'll come up and – I'll come out and see you and tell you about it, so he came to see me. He had been one of the major undercover operatives for the FBI in PATCON for about 10 years. PATCON ran throughout the '90s.

His health was bad. He said that he wanted to, I guess, set the record straight about what had happened. He had joined the FBI in infiltrating about 23 groups. And he said his objective was, he felt that these groups were dangerous and a threat to the country. But looking back on it, he now sees that the real objective of the FBI was to infiltrate and then fight these groups so they could be crushed. And he said they targeted the right wing, the military movement, evangelical Christian right, and others who were out of favor perhaps with the government or were critical of the government. He said that Ruby Ridge was a PATCON operation, Waco was a PATCON operation. He told me that he believed Oklahoma City was a PATCON operation but he couldn't say for sure because he wasn't involved in that operation. But he thought it was a PATCON operation because the others who had worked with him on PATCON were there.

And PATCON is an ugly, ugly story. According to this man, that PATCON was running guns and ammunition, automatic weapons out of the same gun store in Arizona that's now the subject of the Fast and Furious scandal, and doing it in the '90s. So when Attorney General Holder says the government knew nothing about PATCON – about Fast and Furious, that this a rogue operation run by a local ATF agent in Arizona, that's not true. The equivalent of PATCON, the prototype of PATCON was being run by the FBI and the ATF in the mid 1990s. Only there, they were funneling weapons and ammunition to the militia movement and the right, the extreme right of this country. And that's the real story. And if folks would get beyond Fast and Furious and look where the real story is, it will be PATCON.

I'd like to talk a little bit more about Elohim City. It's a fascinating place because of the people who were there. McVeigh was there. The Midwest Bank Robbers were there. Guthrie was there. Strassmeir was there. And as I started to probe the FBI for information related to Elohim City, I found out the ATF had informants there. The Secret Service was involved. And recently, I discovered that the CIA was involved. Now you have to ask yourself, what in the hell is the CIA doing involved with a right wing, evangelical Christian group in eastern Oklahoma. And when I pressed the CIA for documents and records linking Strassmeir, CIA, and Elohim City to the bombing, I received a denial from the CIA. And the reason they gave for not releasing anything to me was, and I quote, "Unauthorized release of this information could cause grave damage to our national security," unquote. For the first time in all these years I've been fighting the government for information under the Freedom of Information Act that is the only time that national security has ever been used as a reason not to turn over documents. And

it is a bullet-proof exemption. All they have to do is say "national security," you can't look beyond that statement. But I think it's telling that they raised and played that national security card when I asked for information linking Strassmeir, the CIA, Elohim City, and the bombing. Immediately, they're back with that national security claim.

ROCKWELL: And, see, this is such a fascinating story. You know, we could have you on for a 24-hour podcast. And I'll hope you'll come back and tell us much more. But I thought, today, maybe if you would just finish up and talk a little bit about the case of the cameras on the Murrah Building and what happened to the videos, and you're fight to get access to those videos.

TRENTADUE: Once the CIA had played the national security card, I began to focus on the notion that there were surveillance tapes that would have shown the actual attack on the Murrah Building. And I was given a timeline that had been prepared by the government for purposes in the McVeigh trial. And the timeline said, and I quote, "Surveillance video shows the Ryder truck pulling up to the federal building and then pausing 7 to 10 seconds before resuming into a slot in front of the building. The same surveillance tape shows a truck detonation 3 minutes and 6 seconds after the suspects exited the vehicle."

Now "suspects" is significant because the FBI has always claimed there were only two people involved essentially, McVeigh and Nichols. Nichols was not with McVeigh that morning; that McVeigh did this all by himself. I filed a Freedom of Information Act for the surveillance camera tapes on the Murrah Building to support that. And, of course, the FBI refused to turn them over. I sue. And to support that lawsuit, I had an affidavit from a police officer in Oklahoma City who had arrived on scene within minutes of the bombing. He and others were in the rubble trying to save people. And he said to me that they were literally ordered out of the building at gun point by the FBI. And as he stood around, he watched the FBI take the surveillance cameras down off the building. Well, I sued to get those tapes. And the FBI doesn't deny they exist but they have told the federal judge, and what they told me, is they can't find them.

Now here you have a video tape of what was then the largest mass murder in the United States, showing the people who perpetrated it. You would have thought that it would have been "exhibit number one" in McVeigh's criminal trial, but it wasn't. No one has ever seen that tape. And when I pushed them for it and pushed them for it, they just keep saying we can't find it. And we have a hearing here in Salt Lake in March over the FBI's inability to find that video tape. To me, it's beyond incredible that they can't find that tape.

The reason they don't want that tape released is I have a suspicion that one of the people getting out of that truck on the morning of April 19, 1995, was working for the FBI. The FBI had, I now know, at least five or six undercover operatives linked in with McVeigh in Elohim City. What I don't know is the motivation

behind the bombing. It is clear now that the FBI knew well in advance it was going to happen. It's reasonably clear, if you believe Terry Nichols, and I do, that an FBI operative provided the detonators for the explosive to explode the bomb. What is not clear is whether it was a sting operation gone bad, that the plan was to stop it but the FBI failed, or else they wanted it to happen, as horrible as that sounds. And that, I don't know. I don't have the answer to that. But it's clear they knew. It's clear that they facilitated the bombing, directly or indirectly. It's clear they didn't stop it.

ROCKWELL: Jesse, just to clear up one small point, unlike, say, surveillance cameras in a 7-Eleven or whatever, the tapes were not inside the camera but were rather recorded at a distance, is that correct?

TRENTADUE: Why these tapes were not destroyed in the bombing itself was the cameras were mounted on the exterior of the building but the tapes themselves were recorded off-site in a central location in Oklahoma City where apparently the surveillance cameras for all the federal buildings in the area were monitored and recorded. So they couldn't claim – the FBI couldn't claim that the tapes has been damaged or destroyed. They clearly had the tapes, when you look at these references to the surveillance cameras and what the cameras captured that morning. They just don't want to turn them over.

I think another point that's important to make here is this scandal, this cover up, for lack of a better word, transcends political affiliations. It goes from Republican to Democrat, to Democrat to Republican. And the reason is that the real power in this country are the people who run the agencies, those just below the elected officials and their appointees. These are the people – they're more or less a third party. We have Democrats and Republicans in the third party, are the people who run the agencies. The director of the FBI, for example, who stays in office from administration to administration, these are the people with the most to lose and the ones who work the hardest to keep this ugly secret a secret.

ROCKWELL: Well, Jesse Trentadue, keep doing what you're doing. You're an inspiring example of what one man can do even against something so vast as the federal government. It also shows that there are weaknesses in the walls surrounding the government. It is possible to get some truth out of them.

I hope you'll come back on the show and tell us about your progress, not only of this upcoming case in Oklahoma City about the tapes, but about all the other work you're doing.

I'd just say God bless you for what you're doing to bring justice for your brother and, I might add, for all of us.

So thanks. Thanks for coming on. Look forward to having you back.

TRENTADUE: Well, I appreciate being here. And it has come at a terrible price. I mean, my family – lost my mother and lost my father, been harassed constantly by the FBI. My parents were harassed in their last years of their lives by the FBI. It's just –

ROCKWELL: It's the secret police, right? I mean, these are – this is not an agency stemming out of sort of the original vision of the American republic. This is quite a nasty operation.

TRENTADUE: What I found is it's much like a living being. You would think that the federal government and the institutions of the federal government were established to protect and service us, the citizens, but that's not true. Their first function is to protect themselves, much like any living thing. So they're going to do everything in their power to preserve themselves and their power.

ROCKWELL: Well, thank you for all you're doing to try to prevent that from happening or at least to get some of the truth out. And I know this has been horrific for you and for your family. It would have been so easy for you to just sort of try to forget it and go on with your life, but you wouldn't allow that to happen. You put yourself on the line. You've had great achievements as a result.

Remind us, before we go, of your website, which, of course, we'll link to on the podcast as well.

TRENTADUE: It's kennethrentadue.com.

ROCKWELL: And you've got all these documents up there?

TRENTADUE: They'll be linked to. Or you type in PATCON and Kenneth Trentadue, they'll show up.

And again, for your audience to know that I'm not making this up. These are coming out of government records.

ROCKWELL: Jesse, my audience especially is not going to have any problem – (laughter) – believing that. Thanks for talking to them. And, as I say, I hope you'll come back.

TRENTADUE: Thank you very much for having me, sir.

ROCKWELL: Bye-bye.

TRENTADUE: Bye.

ROCKWELL: Well, thanks so much for listening to the LEW ROCKWELL SHOW today. Take a look at all the podcasts. There have been hundreds of them. There's a link on the upper right-hand corner of the LRC front page. Thank you.