

## WITNESS DESCRIBES PLOT FOR RACE WAR

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In the East Coast Aryan Brotherhood, Thomas "Hammer" Struss found a new family, the white power gang whose logo he emblazoned on his neck and whose battle call to racial war he adopted as his own during six years in a New Jersey jail.

Out of gang loyalty sprang an ambitious plan to found "Aryan Cell One" around the nucleus of Ipswich resident Leo Felton, dedicated to sparking "rahowa," or racial holy war, Struss told a federal jury yesterday.

Struss's testimony in US District Court in Boston often sounded like a primer for white supremacist gang recruitment in prisons. He described a network of convicts and outside helpers who organized correspondence courses in Aryan supremacy and neo-Nazi ideology.

Felton, 31, and his girlfriend, Erica Chase, 22, are on trial for conspiring to bomb a Jewish or African-American landmark. According to Struss, the group shared a common dream of a racial guerrilla war waged by a small underground cell, financing stealth terror attacks against Jews and African-Americans with bank robberies and armored car heists.

Felton is also accused of robbing a Boylston Street bank with Struss in February 2001; Struss already has pleaded guilty to federal firearms charges in New Jersey and faces 10 years in prison.

While still in jail, Struss said he, Felton, and the Aryan Brotherhood's leader Wesley "Wolf" Dellinger hatched the plot for a terrorist cell that would provoke a race war by killing Jewish and African-American leaders.

Struss's adventure with Aryan Cell One landed him back in prison just days after a six-year sentence for assault and robbery. There, the prospect of decades in prison turned the 26-year-old high school dropout against his former peers in the struggle for white supremacy.

Speaking softly and avoiding eye contact with Felton, Struss described how his dedication to racist causes blossomed only after he went to prison in 1995. After a failed escape attempt two years later, Struss entered a maximum security unit in New Jersey where he discovered "like-minded individuals" who, like Struss, believed in racial separation.

"I was educated to the cause," he said, sporting a shaved head, a Fu-Manchu beard, and tattoos on the left side of his neck.

In order to join the Aryan Brotherhood, Struss said, he had to prove himself by stabbing a black inmate, a process called "blood in." He said he stabbed two more people during the remainder of his prison sentence.

For his commitment, he was promoted to a hard-core subgroup named "Einharjar," after elite warriors in Norse mythology.

"People in that group were the most dedicated, most serious, willing to do whatever was necessary to advance our cause by violence and force," Struss testified.

Struss also learned how Aryan Brotherhood members like Dellinger, and his friend Felton, a member of the more "hard-core" White Order of Thule smuggled hate literature and neo-Nazi tracts into prison.

In a process they called "berg-ing," a reference to Jewish surnames, accomplices on the outside would mix racist literature with legal papers in an envelope labeled "legal materials" - which by law prison officials cannot read - and affix false return address labels with phony law firm names like Greenberg & Weinberg. Felton bragged in a letter to Chase that his ruse had always fooled authorities.

Struss took on the nickname "Hammer" for the hammer; Struss and Felton also used the word "hammer" as a code word for a gun.

Although he had communicated with Felton only through surreptitious "jail mail," within days of his release from prison in February 2001 Struss took a bus to Boston to join Felton, also just out of jail. Having declared himself ready to be "martyred," Struss wanted "to get this thing started."

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