

Hale's security boss was FBI informer - E-mails, tapes led to arrest, U.S. says

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For almost four years, Matthew Hale 's security chief has been on the FBI's payroll, taping conversations and providing e-mails in which the white supremacist plotted the murder of a federal judge, according to federal prosecutors.

Hale, the 31-year-old leader of the World Church of the Creator, was arrested Jan. 8 in a dramatic scene inside the federal courthouse in Chicago and accused of soliciting the murder of U.S. District Judge Joan Humphrey Lefkow.

In a federal detention hearing Thursday in Hammond, prosecutors charged that since late November, Hale has sent messages and had conversations about Lefkow with his followers and specifically a trusted confidant turned FBI informant known as "Brother Tony," who heads the White Berets, a security detail for Hale, prosecutors said. The FBI has paid the informant about \$50,000, prosecutors said.

Defense attorneys requested a hearing outside of Chicago to avoid having it handled by one of Lefkow's colleagues.

Hale, a slight man dressed in an orange prison jumpsuit, visibly slumped in his seat when prosecutors revealed their source, a man Hale trusted to such a degree that the two once discussed shooting a disloyal church member, prosecutors said.

Hale called on the source to gather information about Lefkow, whom he labeled a "corrupt judge" and "probable Jew," after she attempted to enforce a higher court's ruling ordering Hale to destroy printed materials about his church that violated trademark laws, prosecutors said.

In a Dec. 4 e-mail to the FBI source labeled "assignment," Hale requested that the man find Lefkow's home address, Assistant U.S. Atty. M. David Weisman said (the name of the assistant U.S. attorney as published has been corrected here and in subsequent references in this text).

The following day, Hale and the source had a recorded conversation in which the man told Hale he was working on getting Lefkow's address, Weisman said.

"When we get it, we going to exterminate the rat?" the source asked, according to a transcript Weisman read.

"Well, whatever you want to do basically," Hale allegedly responded.

"The Jew rat," the source said.

"You know, my position has always been that I, you know, I'm going to fight within the law . . . but that information has been provided; if you wish to do anything yourself, you can," Hale responded, according to Weisman.

In a second conversation recorded at Hale's East Peoria home on Dec. 17, the source told Hale that plans were in place to kill Lefkow and the hit would occur soon, Weisman said.

Though Hale did not directly endorse the killing, he "never instructed the source not to carry out the plan," Weisman said.

As the conversation came to an end, Hale told the source to remember they were talking about Little League baseball, though the sport never came up in their conversation, Weisman said.

After hearing the government's evidence, U.S. Magistrate Judge Andrew P. Rodovich ordered Hale held without bond despite his attorney's argument that Hale stated at least twice that he wanted no part in the plot against Lefkow.

At one point in a recorded conversation, Hale told the source, "Here's the thing, brother, here's the thing. I can't be part of any such thing," according to his attorney, Matthew Madden.

The FBI recruited Hale's confidant in the summer of 1999, soon after an early July shooting rampage by one-time World Church member Benjamin Smith. The shootings, which targeted minorities, left nine injured and two dead, including former Northwestern University basketball coach Ricky Byrdsong.

Though Hale was never arrested in connection with the shootings, federal agents discovered that he had been in contact with Smith personally and by telephone several times in the days before the spree.

The source, who was often seen with Hale wearing the security detail's uniform of a white beret and long black leather coat, provided federal agents with a stream of information about Hale, Weisman said.

The two were fast friends and even traveled together to white supremacist meetings, he said.

In May 2000, they drove from Illinois to Kentucky for Nordicfest, a gathering of white supremacists, prosecutors said.

On the way, Hale told the man how angry he was at a church member he believed was disloyal, according to a transcript of the recorded conversation.

"If I was to tell you to go out and shoot this bastard, I know you would," Hale allegedly said.

Moments earlier, the source told Hale, "You know where my heart is," according to the transcript.

Prosecutors would not reveal the source's identity or confirm that his real name is Tony.

But since Smith's rampage, he has provided a number of telling details about Hale, including his take on Smith, they said. Hale has long acknowledged Smith was a friend but denied he knew of his murderous plans.

In a conversation on June 23, 2000, less than a year after the murders, Hale reportedly told his followers and the source that he admired and respected Smith.

According to prosecutors, Hale recalled how Smith's rampage came a few days after Hale was denied a law license in Illinois.

"There was no question when July 2 came and I told the media I was denied my law license he said, 'Screw it. You're going to screw with the leader of my church, I'm going to screw with you,'" Hale said, according to prosecutors.

"I wish he hadn't done it," Hale reportedly said. "But he made us a household name. That's why I will always remember him, respect him and appreciate him."

Hale's aged father, Russell Hale, sat quietly in court as the transcripts were read.

He offered his home and another piece of property in return for his son's freedom while awaiting trial.

But Rodovich agreed with prosecutors that Hale was a danger to the community and a risk to flee.

His trial, which is expected to take about two weeks, is scheduled to begin July 14 in Chicago. A judge from outside of Chicago will hear the case at the request of the defense.

Caption: PHOTO

PHOTO (color): Matthew Hale will go on trial in July on a charge he solicited the murder of U.S. District Judge Joan Humphrey Lefkow.

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Page: 1

Correction: This story contains corrected material, published Jan. 25, 2003.

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