

2nd insider depicts Hale plot - Witness says he was asked to kill

Chicago Tribune - October 22, 2003

Author: Matt O'Connor, Tribune staff reporter.

A second former confidant of white supremacist Matthew Hale recently told federal authorities that he, too, was solicited by Hale in December to kill a federal judge in Chicago, prosecutors revealed Tuesday.

The government filing said Jon Fox, a former "reverend" of Hale's World Church of the Creator, also claimed Hale wanted attorneys opposing him in a trademark lawsuit killed and the Oregon church involved in the legal dispute burned down.

Fox, who described himself as the leader in Illinois of Hale's movement earlier this year, would also testify that Hale had reasons to suspect that Benjamin Smith, a Hale follower, would engage in a deadly shooting spree in 1999 before that bloody 4th of July weekend, prosecutors said.

Although Hale's lawyer blasted Fox's allegations, the sudden emergence of a second witness insisting Hale wanted a federal judge killed would appear to add to the admitted racist's legal woes shortly before his trial.

Hale was charged in January with soliciting the killing of U.S. District Judge Joan Humphrey Lefkow based largely on undercover recordings made by the head of the White Berets, Hale's security detail, who was an FBI plant days after Smith's rampage killed two people and injured nine.

Government transcripts, recently made public by Hale's lawyers, identify Hale's trusted security boss as Tony Evola.

Prosecutors also want to call Hale's wife to testify against him "regarding observations that she made of the defendant's actions, behavior and other physical evidence that she observed while with [Hale]," another government filing said Tuesday.

Hale is scheduled to go on trial Nov. 3 in federal court in Chicago on charges he solicited Evola to kill Lefkow after she enforced a court order directing Hale's church to change its name after it lost a trademark infringement lawsuit. The group is now known as the Creativity Movement.

The government said it expects to add Fox's allegations to Hale's indictment as early as next week.

If allowed to testify, Fox would say he was approached by Hale in early December and asked if he would kill Lefkow or if he knew someone willing to kill her, prosecutors said.

At the time, Fox was working closely with Hale, who ran his operation from his home in Downstate East Peoria, according to the government filing.

Fox alleged that during the same conversation Hale also said he wanted the opposing attorneys in the trademark infringement suit killed and the Oregon church with the similar name burned down, prosecutors said.

Fox told authorities he turned down the assignment and told Hale he could not find "a lone wolf" to carry out the killing.

In addition, Fox would testify that Hale confided in him about details of Smith's shooting spree. Those details led Fox to believe that Hale suspected Smith would engage in the rampage before it took place.

Among the charges against him, Hale is accused of instructing his father to lie to the grand jury investigating the Smith shootings.

Hale's lawyers are trying to block prosecutors from introducing evidence at the trial that would attempt to link Hale to Smith or the shooting spree, arguing it would cause "overwhelming prejudice."

One of Hale's lawyers, Thomas Anthony Durkin, ridiculed the government's use of Fox, saying, "It's a government Hail Mary pass to bail out a horribly weak case."

Fox was interviewed by the FBI in January and didn't say anything then about Hale's alleged solicitation to kill the judge, Durkin said.

Durkin said Fox's claims come down to his word alone because prosecutors have no tape-recordings of his conversations with Hale.

In Tuesday's filing, Assistant U.S. Atty. M. David Weisman said authorities only became aware of Fox's allegations "within the last few weeks" and obtained his sworn statements just this month.

Prosecutors intend to demonstrate Fox's close relationship with Hale through three letters to Fox in which Hale intimated they had a trusted relationship, Weisman said.

Fox has also turned over a signature stamp of Hale's and bank records obtained from Hale, both illustrating Hale's trust in him, prosecutors said.

Caption: PHOTO

PHOTO: ( Matthew) Hale .

Edition: Near Northwest Final

Section: Metro

Page: 1

Index Terms: MURDER ; COURT ; OFFICIAL ; ATTEMPT ; CULT ; RIGHTS  
COURT

Record Number: CTR0310220177

Copyright 2003, Chicago Tribune