

Hale jury set to enter 2nd day of discussions

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A federal jury deciding the fate of white supremacist Matthew Hale is scheduled to resume deliberations Friday after undergoing its first day of discussions Thursday without reaching a verdict in the murder-solicitation case.

In the late afternoon, the racially diverse jury asked for and received a transcript of the testimony of Jon Fox, a former Hale follower who was among two government witnesses alleging that Hale had solicited them to kill a federal judge.

The other was federal informant Anthony Evola, Hale's trusted security chief who turned out to be an FBI plant and secretly recorded their conversations.

Hale, the "Pontifex Maximus" of the former World Church of the Creator, is on trial in federal court in Chicago on charges he sought to have U.S. District Judge Joan Lefkow murdered after she ordered the church to change its name in a trademark-infringement lawsuit.

In closing arguments Wednesday, Hale's lawyer, Thomas Anthony Durkin, contended that the undercover tape-recordings showed Evola repeatedly prodded Hale over the plot. Durkin also ripped Fox's credibility.

But prosecutors said Hale got his message across to Evola even though he spoke cautiously to give himself "plausible deniability." Prosecutors also said Fox, a former church leader, was a trusted ally.

Before deliberations began Thursday morning, U.S. District Judge James Moody instructed jurors on the law.

Two instructions could be critical. One says the government must prove beyond a reasonable doubt that Hale was not entrapped. The other says that in determining if Hale was entrapped, jurors may consider whether Evola first suggested the criminal act or whether Hale showed reluctance to perform criminal activity.

"While no single factor necessarily indicates by itself that a defendant was or was not entrapped, the central question is whether the defendant showed reluctance to engage in criminal activity that was overcome by inducement or persuasion," Moody told jurors.

Hale also is charged with three counts of obstructing justice. One relates to the murder solicitation charge, another alleges that Hale disobeyed Lefkow's order in the lawsuit, and the final one alleges that Hale coached his father to lie to a grand jury investigating the 1999 shooting rampage of Hale follower Benjamin Smith.

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