

## White Supremacist Found Guilty in Plot

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Author: Associated Press

White supremacist leader Matthew Hale , whose gospel of "racial holy war" was linked to a follower's deadly shooting rampage five years ago, was found guilty Monday of trying to have a federal judge killed.

Hale, 32, was convicted on four of the five charges against him. He was acquitted on one of two counts of soliciting the murder of a federal judge. The judge was not attacked.

Prosecutors said Hale was furious after U.S. District Judge Joan Humphrey Lefkow ordered him to stop using the name World Church of the Creator, which had been trademarked by an Oregon-based religious group that has no ties to Hale.

Hale sat with his hands clasped on the table as the verdicts were read. He dipped his head slightly but showed no other reaction.

Hale never testified during the two-week trial, and chief defense counsel Thomas Anthony Durkin called no witnesses, saying the prosecution's evidence was the weakest he had seen in a major case.

The defense argued that Hale never asked anyone to kill the judge and that the FBI used an informant to draw him into a murder plot.

During the trial, jurors heard more than a dozen tapes of Hale using racial slurs, including one in which he laughs about the 1999 shooting rampage by one of his followers, Benjamin Smith. Smith targeted minorities and killed two people, including former Northwestern University basketball coach Ricky Byrdsong. Smith's three-day rampage across Illinois and Indiana left nine people wounded and ended only when he shot himself as police closed in, bringing the death toll to three.

In Hale's trial, prosecutors focused on one tape of a brief, veiled exchange recorded Dec. 17, 2002, when the FBI informant, Anthony Evola, showed up unannounced at Hale's East Peoria home. Lefkow had issued her order a month earlier.

"Are we gonna exterminate the rat?" Evola can be heard asking Hale on the tape, which Evola testified meant Lefkow.

"Well, whatever you want to do, basically," Hale replied.

Moments later, Hale added: "My position has always been that, you know, I'm going to fight within the law and, but, ah, that information's been provided if you wish to, ah, do anything, yourself, you can. So that makes it clear."

"Consider it done," Evola said.

U.S. District Judge James T. Moody did not set a sentencing date.

Solicitation of murder carries a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison. Hale could also get a maximum of 10 years on each of three counts of obstruction of justice.

After the verdict Durkin, who said he planned to appeal, said he believed prosecutors targeted Hale "the day of the Ben Smith shootings."

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