

## Officials monitor hate talk on Web - Backlash feared on Hale verdict

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Author: Matt O'Connor, Tribune staff reporter.

The FBI is stepping up its monitoring of hate groups' Web sites in the wake of white supremacist Matthew Hale 's conviction Monday on charges he solicited the murder of a federal judge in Chicago.

Richard K. Ruminski, the FBI's assistant special agent in charge of counterterrorism investigations in Chicago, warned the FBI won't tolerate anyone crossing the line from protected free speech to advocating violence.

Ruminski said Tuesday that a couple of Web sites that provide a forum for people to post their comments have been of particular concern since Hale's conviction. Some of the views have been "almost threatening in nature," he said.

"It concerns us to the point where we're going to see what legal actions can be taken in order to maybe legally take that Web site down," he said.

For instance, one racist Web site posted the home address and cell and home phone numbers of Anthony Evola, Hale's security chief who turned out to be an FBI informant who secretly tape-recorded their conversations.

"In Case Anyone Wants To Say Hi," the posting said ominously.

The problem was the Web site listed the wrong Anthony Evola, authorities said.

That Anthony Evola's son, Joseph, said the incident has caused the family great concern for its safety.

"You don't know who is going to show up at the house," he said.

As he spoke Tuesday, FBI agents were conferring with the family inside its suburban Chicago home. The local police are also providing round-the-clock protection, he said.

Hale, the leader of the former World Church of the Creator, was convicted of soliciting Evola to kill U.S. District Judge Joan Lefkow after she ordered him to change the name of the church as part of a trademark lawsuit. He was also found guilty of obstructing justice.

Violence after a setback for Hale isn't unprecedented. In 1999, after a legal defeat in Hale's attempt to obtain a law license, follower Benjamin Smith went on a deadly shooting rampage, killing two, including former Northwestern University basketball Coach Ricky Byrdsong, and wounding nine others.

"Given the violent history of this organization, there is some concern that kind of activity may happen again," said Devin Burghart of the Center for New Community, an anti-bigotry group based in Chicago.

A Web site of Hale's group in Ohio spoke of "dumpster diving time"--implying, Burghart said, a call to search garbage at the homes of jurors from Hale's trial to prove an outlandish claim that they had been paid off by a Jewish organization.

"That just shows you to the extremes that these people go, how bizarre a lot of their ideas are," said the FBI's Ruminski.

Two jurors who spoke to the Tribune after the verdict did so only after promises of anonymity because of concerns for the safety of themselves and their families.

Mark Potok, a spokesman for the Southern Poverty Law Center in Montgomery, Ala., which has monitored hate groups since 1981, said a review Tuesday of several Web sites showed a lot of anger over Hale's conviction but no one proposing clear-cut violence.

The viewpoints were mixed, Potok said, with some warning the verdict was the result of advocating violence. Others voiced disgust for the legal system and charged that Hale had been set up by Jews.

"There is some real rage out there," Potok said. "Given Ben Smith's rampage, it's wise to be cautious."

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