

Federal judge's family killed - Husband, mother found slain in basement - Jurist had been a target of white supremacist

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U.S. District Judge Joan H. Lefkow found her husband and mother shot dead in the basement of her home Monday night, less than a year after white supremacist Matthew Hale was convicted of trying to have her murdered for holding him in contempt of court.

Michael F. Lefkow, 64, an attorney, and Donna Grace Humphrey, 90, were lying in blood with gunshot wounds to the head when the judge arrived to a darkened house at 6 p.m., a source close to the investigation said.

Police said they were conducting "death investigations," and cautioned about drawing any connections to Hale, who is awaiting sentencing for trying to solicit the judge's murder. Sources said Michael Lefkow and Humphrey were found together, each was shot once in the head. No weapon was recovered, but police found two .22 caliber casings.

Security at the Lefkow home--including a camera mounted outside the home and guards posted on the block in unmarked cars--had been beefed up after the allegations against Hale emerged in January 2003. But neighbors said the extra measures tailed off about the time Hale was convicted in April 2004.

Investigators say there was a sign of forced entry, a broken window, at the family's three-story gray-sided home in the 5200 block of North Lakewood Avenue in the Edgewater neighborhood.

Neighbors on Monday night said the judge ran into the street screaming after discovering the bodies and was consoled by police officers who put a blanket over her. She was taken to the Belmont Area headquarters while detectives, evidence technicians and federal agents worked the scene in and around the home.

Michael Lefkow was an attorney in private practice, focusing in employment law. He was deeply involved in the Episcopal Church, including his parish, St. Luke's in Evanston. He ran unsuccessfully for Cook County judge in 2002. The couple married in 1975 and have four daughters; Michael Lefkow also had a daughter from a previous marriage. The couple's youngest daughter, who lived at home, was in the house in the middle of the afternoon to get some gym clothes, according to a federal law enforcement source. She did not see either her father or grandmother, the source said.

Thomas Robb, a close friend of the couple who runs a food pantry in Edgewater, said Michael Lefkow was recovering from surgery for an Achilles tendon injury suffered while playing tennis. He said Humphrey, who was visiting from Colorado, was frail and able to get around only with two canes.

"The thing that hurts us and hurts the family is, he wanted to walk each of his daughters down the aisle and there's a couple of them that are still unmarried," Robb said. "This is a very big loss."

Hale, the 33-year-old founder of the white supremacist World Church of the Creator, was arrested in January 2003 and charged with soliciting Lefkow's murder a month

after she held him in contempt for continuing to call his church by that name after an appellate court ruled such a use was a trademark infringement.

Based largely on testimony from Hale's "security chief"--an FBI informant--a jury convicted Hale of soliciting the judge's murder last April. U.S. District Judge James Moody is scheduled to sentence Hale on April 6.

Hale is being held in the Metropolitan Correctional Center in the South Loop under special administrative measures taken against suspected terrorists since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. The restrictions prohibit him from communicating with others through the media, mail or telephone and from having visitors under the theory that he could incite violence among his followers.

The restrictions were ordered by then-U.S. Atty. Gen. John Ashcroft on March 3, 2003, less than two months after Hale's arrest.

Hale has been allowed to communicate with Moody, who was brought in from Hammond to preside over the trial.

Within the last two weeks, federal agents in Chicago received a bulletin saying the white supremacist Aryan Brotherhood was possibly planning to harm "law enforcement and their families," according to a source. Information on what security measures might have been put in place in the wake of that alert was not immediately available.

Federal investigators said a protective detail was organized to protect the judge Monday night.

Timothy Murphy, Hale's cousin and an attorney who briefly represented him, called the news of the slayings "horrifying."

But Murphy said he did not think Hale was capable of violence.

"I don't believe that Matt attempted to threaten Judge Lefkow in the first place," he said.

But Murphy added: "I would imagine that if what this is is a homicide that Matt's followers are going to be under closer scrutiny."

Hale first came to prominence in 1999 as a white supremacist and head of the World Church of the Creator. Over the Independence Day weekend that year, former church member Benjamin Smith went on a shooting spree directed at racial minorities, killing two and wounding nine.

The FBI investigated Hale's role but he was never charged.

In 2000, the Oregon-based group TE-TA-MA Truth Foundation, more commonly called Church of the Creator, sued Hale for trademark infringement.

Lefkow ruled in Hale's favor, but a federal appeals court in 2002 ruled that Hale's group had violated the Oregon church's trademark. In October 2003, Lefkow imposed sanctions of \$200,000 against Hale when he continued to use the name despite the appellate court ruling. Federal prosecutors alleged that dispute led him to seek to have her killed.

Evidence presented at Hale's trial included an e-mail he sent his security chief, Tony Evola, asking for Lefkow's home address. A message, posted on the "White Aryan Resistance" Web site, gave the address and made derogatory comments about the Lefkows, presuming they were Jewish.

Caption: PHOTOS 3 MAP

PHOTO (color): Investigators stand at the home of Judge Joan Lefkow, where the bodies of her husband and mother were found Monday. Tribune photo by Charles Cherney. PHOTO: A Chicago police officer stands guard Monday outside the home of U.S. District Judge Joan Lefkow in the Edgewater area. Tribune photo by Charles Cherney. PHOTO (color): (Joan) Lefkow. MAP: Bodies found. Chicago Tribune Edition: Chicago Final

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