

Lefkow murderer may have left DNA - But FBI lab finds no matches so far to known criminals

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The DNA of an unknown man was pulled from a cigarette butt found in the kitchen sink of the North Side house where the husband and mother of a federal judge were slain last week, sources close to the investigation said late Monday.

The genetic material, isolated at the FBI laboratory in Quantico, Va., does not match any known criminal profile across the U.S., investigators said.

The profile also does not match any members of U.S. District Judge Joan Lefkow's family.

Investigators' chief hope has been that testing would produce a match to a known convicted felon and break the case. Now the task force of Chicago police and federal agents is expected to use the profile to compare it to the DNA of a suspect once he can be identified, sources said.

FBI officials said last week that more than 2.27 million genetic profiles are available for matching in the national database.

Members of the task force were expected to meet Tuesday to discuss the finding and its potential impact on the case.

Investigators also have been working other forensic evidence in the case, including a fingerprint on broken glass, other cigarette butts and a soda can found near the home in the area where one witness reported seeing a car parked. It was not immediately known whether testing on the other items was finished, sources said, but the butt in the sink has been called a key piece of evidence because it was inside the Lefkow residence, where the bodies of Michael Lefkow, 64, and Donna Humphrey, 89, were found in the basement.

During the first few days after the slayings, investigators focused quickly on a number of close supporters of jailed white supremacist Matthew Hale, but so far the investigators have been able to verify that they have sound alibis. That group included at least one member of Hale's "security" team, which has in the past accompanied him to federal court in Chicago.

As that list runs thin, investigators have said they will continue to focus on the idea that, if the murderer is associated with a hate group, that person was a "lone wolf" acting alone or perhaps with members of a loose cell of a national organization.

A number of people linked to Hale have been interviewed by investigators in the last week. Among them were a Ku Klux Klan leader who hosted Hale at rallies on his Indiana farm, a former Hale associate who left Chicago on a one-way ticket to Las Vegas last week and a man recently released from a Florida penitentiary.

Jerald Overturf, 45, said he is the head of "prison ministries" for Hale's organization, or its "imperator."

Released from prison in January after serving time for trafficking in stolen property and escape, Overturf said he told investigators he was at his construction job on

Monday. He said they showed him the sketches of two men being sought in connection with the Lefkow slayings, but he could not identify them.

Overturf said he told investigators he agreed with their theory that an individual or member of a small cell related to Hale's group might have been behind the killings.

"It wouldn't surprise me if somebody did take it upon themselves to do this," Overturf said. "They might think they'd get some brownie points later. I think it's disgusting. It's not what the church was supposed to be about."

Investigators also have spent time monitoring hate groups and their Internet sites, looking for leads and watching for messages that might signal threats of violence against other judges or members of law enforcement.

A Web site in New Jersey over the weekend posted the names of three appellate court judges who ruled against Hale in a civil matter, suggesting to the "pro-white" community that the judges are the "real villains" who deserve to feel "public scorn" at their homes.

To some, it sounded like a call to harm the three jurists less than a week after the Lefkow killings, which are considered to be a terrorist attack on the American justice system. Lefkow had enforced the higher judges' ruling in a copyright infringement case involving the now-former name of Hale's organization.

Legal experts agree that the threshold for speech to be construed as "inciting violence" or a "true threat" is high, and must include a specific command to do someone harm.

Just because the judges and federal agents protecting them "may feel menaced and troubled by it doesn't make it a threat," said Eugene Volokh, a 1st Amendment scholar at UCLA's law school. "Publishing someone's address might not be terribly ethical, but it's constitutionally protected."

Federal authorities said they have been monitoring the Web site, but have not taken any action against white supremacist radio host and blogger Hal Turner after he posted the courthouse addresses of the three appellate court judges. Turner said Monday that he was deciding whether he would post the judges' home addresses.

The judges ruled against Hale in his copyright infringement case after Lefkow ruled in his favor. After the appellate ruling, white supremacists lashed out at Lefkow for enforcing it and eventually levying heavy fines against Hale. Turner now says that the appellate judges should have been the object of white supremacists' anger.

The FBI is monitoring Turner's Web site with the U.S. attorney's office in order to determine whether he crosses the line between "free speech and inciting an illegal conduct," said Ross Rice, spokesman for the FBI in Chicago.

So far, the rhetoric has not come close to the line, Rice said.

Turner says he knows exactly where the line is and how to avoid crossing it. He also said he is not sending veiled threats meant to be interpreted by his audience as a call to violence.

Meanwhile, in the Lefkows' Chicago neighborhood, more than 100 gathered Monday night outside the family's home as local religious leaders led the group in prayers that called for justice and peace.

Thom Greene, 50, came to the vigil to show that the community is stronger than the terror inflicted on the Lefkow family.

"We came here because this is a symbol of everything that is good," said Greene, holding a black steel candleholder. "And what happened last week symbolized everything that is bad."

Caption: PHOTO

PHOTO (color): Riley Baugh, 11, and her mother, Meg, take part in a vigil Monday night outside the Lefkow home in Edgewater. Tribune photo by Nuccio DiNuzzo.

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