

Supremacist Sent Code From Jail, Lawyer Says

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Author: JODI WILGOREN ; Gretchen Ruethling contributed reporting for this article. A lawyer for Matthew Hale , the white supremacist convicted last year of plotting to kill a federal judge whose husband and mother were slain last week, said on Tuesday that Mr. Hale's mother called him a few months ago and asked him to pass on an encoded message to one of Mr. Hale's supporters.

"She said she didn't know what the message meant, but she was going to read it to me verbatim because Matt made her write it down when she visited him," the lawyer, Glenn Greenwald, said in an interview. "It was two or three sentences that were very cryptic and impossible to understand in terms of what they were intended to convey."

Mr. Greenwald, who has represented Mr. Hale and his organization in several civil cases and said he did not believe that his client had anything to do with the recent killings, said he told federal agents last week about the conversation with Mr. Hale's mother, Evelyn Hutcheson. Ms. Hutcheson previously said that agents investigating the killings peppered her with questions about encoded messages, which she denounced as "the dumbest thing I've ever heard of."

Mr. Hale's parents said on Tuesday that prison officials were cutting off their contact with their son, who has been held under special administrative measures that restrict them to weekly 15-minute telephone calls on Thursday mornings, and separate hourlong visits every other Tuesday.

Mr. Hale's father, Russell Hale, said he was preparing for the two-and-a-half-hour trek from his home in East Peoria, Ill., to the Metropolitan Correctional Center here when he got a call from his son's prison counselor at 8:30 Monday evening saying not to bother.

"It's tearing at my ex-wife and me because we need him now and he needs us," the elder Mr. Hale said of his son. He said he was too stunned to ask the prison counselor for an explanation, adding, "You can't battle the government, because they always win, no matter what."

Prison officials would not discuss the curtailed contact, and a spokesman for the F.B.I. declined to talk about Ms. Hutcheson's call to Mr. Greenwald.

After their most recent telephone conversation Thursday, Ms. Hutcheson distributed a statement to the news media that she said had been dictated by her son, who denied any involvement in the killing of the judge's relatives. Mr. Greenwald said that communication might have been seen as a violation of the special restrictions and might have led to the cancellation of contact with the parents, who were the only people allowed to speak with Mr. Hale by telephone or in person.

"She's not allowed to disseminate any messages," he said.

Mr. Greenwald, who said he believed that Mr. Hale was wrongly imprisoned, said he did not recall the exact message Ms. Hutcheson relayed to him, or the person it was intended for, but that he had declined to deliver it. He called the message "a caricature of what a coded message would be."

Ms. Hutcheson, in an interview Monday, said that her message to Mr. Greenwald was about someone her son thought should testify at his April 6 sentencing, and that any

coding was only to keep the federal monitors of their conversations from figuring out his legal strategy.

"It was a message for Greenwald about a letter that Matt had written him," Ms. Hutcheson recalled. "I said, 'Matt, this doesn't make sense to me.' He said, 'Greenwald will understand, ask him to read the letter.'"

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