

FBI official hopes Hale sentence is warning

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The FBI boss in Chicago said Thursday he hopes white supremacist Matthew Hale's 40-year prison sentence was a stern warning that threats to the judiciary won't be tolerated.

But just a day after Hale's sentencing for soliciting the murder of a federal judge, one white supremacist Web site raised a question about whether "to string up" the judge who imposed the maximum prison term on Hale.

Below was listed the judge's work address and phone number.

Told of the Web site posting, Robert Grant, the FBI's special agent in charge in Chicago, said he considered it more than a thinly veiled threat to U.S. District Judge James T. Moody, who sentenced Hale on Wednesday.

"People want to stand out on the public square and protest the actions of anybody else, we protect those rights," Grant said in an interview Thursday. "But when you're soliciting something beyond that, they're on very dangerous ground."

Moody imposed the maximum prison term on Hale for soliciting his security chief, secretly working undercover for the FBI, to kill U.S. District Judge Joan Lefkow after she ordered his supremacist group to change its name after losing a trademark-infringement lawsuit.

Calling Hale "a pathetic figure," Grant said he was amazed at Hale's overreaction to what amounted to "a fairly minor [court] decision."

"Hopefully it sends a message that this is not tolerable conduct," Grant said of Hale's sentence.

Emphasizing that the FBI must have a lawful reason to monitor free-speech activity, Grant said he finds some of the messages on Web sites disturbing.

During the investigation into the killings of Lefkow's husband and mother, Grant said, "We saw people on the Internet applauding the murders."

"It reminds you there are people out there that are deranged," he said.

Grant said he is most concerned by the lone wolves such as Bart Ross who lash out violently with a misguided sense of being wronged. Ross confessed in a suicide note to killing Lefkow's husband and mother in the judge's home. Lefkow had thrown out his malpractice lawsuit.

"What's always put fear in us is the lone actor, the one that acts on whatever courage they muster for their own plight in society and act independently of anybody else," he said. "It's very difficult to intercept those individuals."

On Wednesday, federal judicial leaders urged Congress to increase security for judges, including at their homes.

But "do we just throw money at the problem, hire more guards, or is there a better way of doing business?" Grant said.

"Would that have done Judge Lefkow's family any good? More guards wouldn't, probably. In that case, maybe it's a system that could be improved to better predict hostile intent," he said.

Grant said he doesn't fear that Hale, 33, will become a martyr in the eyes of followers as a result of his sentence.

"I think if there are people who are looking for a cause who have those strong beliefs, as objectionable as they are, they are going to find some other venue that gives them satisfaction," Grant said. "Now that he's in jail, there's not much satisfaction he can provide."

Devin Burghart, research director for the Center for New Community, an anti-bigotry group based in Chicago, said only four Hale supporters other than his family showed up for his sentencing.

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