

Bomb Suspect in Jail

Reading, Writing, Jogging, Shooting Basketball

Serge F. Kovalski

April 19, 1996

He sits in a 7-by-10-foot dwelling, sometimes frantically pacing the cold concrete floor. By most measures, these are minimalist quarters. There is a steel cot, a toilet, a sink and a ceiling light. Nothing more, nothing less.

But for Theodore J. Kaczynski, the man who now spends his days confined to this cubicle, its sparse amenities could be considered an improvement over the 10-by-12-foot wooden cabin on a solitary hillside in western Montana where he lived for almost a quarter century with no toilet, no plumbing, no water well, no sewage treatment, no telephone, no electricity and no clock.

Since federal agents lured him out of his shack two weeks ago, Kaczynski, the man authorities believe is the elusive Unabomber, has been in custody in an isolation cell at the Lewis and Clark County Jail in Helena, Mont., as investigators try to link him to a 17-year string of mail bombings that killed three people and injured 23 others.

Why Kaczynski, 53, a Harvard-educated mathematician, gave up a coveted teaching position at the University of California-Berkeley in 1969 for a reclusive and primitive lifestyle is a perplexing question that authorities are trying to understand.

Like his cabin, Kaczynski's cell has one window, only it is much bigger and bullet-proof.

During his two weeks in jail, Kaczynski has not seemed to mind the isolation, law enforcement authorities said. He is reading and writing, sometimes into the early morning hours. The books include tomes on medieval and ancient history, as well as several classical novels.

Kaczynski, who wears a jail-issue orange jumpsuit, is allowed about an hour a day at an outdoor recreation area where he jogs and shoots a basketball – all the while segregated from the other 70 or so inmates being held at the facility each day.

"He is very, very quiet and very polite; he's a model prisoner.," said Sheriff Chuck O'Reilly, who also denied reports that Kaczynski is under a suicide watch. "Someone can get quite despondent in a cell, but he has shown no indication of suicidal tendencies whatsoever."

As Kaczynski remained in jail, a federal grand jury in Great Falls, Mont., met Wednesday under heavy security to consider whether to indict him. But no such action was taken and the panel was not scheduled to meet again until mid-May.

Kaczynski has been charged with possession of bomb-making materials found in his Lincoln, Mont., cabin, but not with any of the attacks attributed to the Unabomber.

Kaczynski is scheduled to appear today in federal court in Helena, Mont., as his attorneys argue that the government should be barred from prosecuting him because of a barrage of leaks to the media concerning the investigation.

In an argument filed yesterday, government prosecutors acknowledged that unnamed "government personnel have disclosed" to members of the press certain details of the search of Kaczynski's cabin and of the government's investigation." Though the government conceded the disclosures were "deplorable," it argued that much of the information has subsequently been made public in court filings and that there is no precedent in law for blocking a prosecution on the basis of media leaks.

Meanwhile, reports surfaced that an east San Francisco Bay Area federal employee alerted authorities in mid-September that she thought that a man who had just handed her a passport application under the name Theodore J. Kaczynski was the Unabomber but that officials never followed up on her tip.

The San Francisco Chronicle reported that the employee discussed her suspicions with two supervisors – including one who was alerted while Kaczynski was still standing in the office – but that no one called the FBI. One of the supervisors, who was getting ready to go home, indicated she did not want to get involved, the employee was quoted as saying. When the employee then telephoned a State Department official in San Francisco to voice her suspicions, she was told to attach a note to the passport application, the Chronicle reported.

The woman said she attached a note saying something to the effect of, "Check this out . . . I think it's the Unabomber," and that the next day the State Department employee told her, "It's being taken care of." However, she said she was never contacted by authorities.

The woman was not identified by the Chronicle, and the reporter who interviewed her, Susan Sward, said she spoke on the condition that her name and agency not be identified. Sward said that after the woman who handled Kaczynski's application was questioned by the FBI on Wednesday she told her she had been instructed "not to talk with anyone."

A State Department spokeswoman in Washington, Nita Budig, declined to comment on the report, citing an "ongoing investigation" and privacy exemptions in the Freedom of Information Act that preclude comment on passport applications.

In another development yesterday, Ellen Tarmichael, who had a brief relationship with Kaczynski in 1978 before saying she no longer wanted to socialize with him, told a news conference in Chicago that she went out with Kaczynski twice. The first time they went out they ate dinner at a suburban restaurant. The second time, they picked apples and then baked a pie. Tarmichael is the manager at Foam Cutting Engineers Inc. in Addison, Ill., where Kaczynski met her while also working as a press operator. Tarmichael said that while baking the pie at Kaczynski's parents' house, she told him she didn't want to see him again. "I felt we didn't have much in common besides our employment," she said.

After that, Kaczynski began posting crude limericks about her around the plant. Kaczynski was soon fired for his behavior by his brother, David, who was a supervisor there. Tarmichael said she never saw the limericks.

Also yesterday, it was determined that a list with 25 University of California-Berkeley math professors' names believed to have been found in Kaczynski's cabin was in fact not. It was actually compiled by the FBI, the school announced. University campus police Capt. William Foley was wrong as a result of miscommunication with the FBI when he said Monday that the names were on the suspected Unabomber's list, said Robert Sanders, spokesman at the school.

Staff writers Tom Kenworthy contributed from Great Falls, Mont.; Edward Walsh from Chicago; and William Claiborne from Los Angeles.

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