

Unabomber trial begins

BBC News Staff

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The trial of the man alleged to be the so-called Unabomber has begun in Sacramento, California, with jury selection expected to last a month. The trial itself will take up to five months.

Panelists are being asked if they are willing to impose the death penalty on Theodore Kaczynski, a 55-year-old former mathematics professor, if he is found guilty.

A US federal judge ruled on Friday that prosecutors could seek the death penalty if the jury found that Mr Kaczynski transported or mailed a bomb with intent to kill.

During a bombing spree between 1978 and 1995, authorities say the Unabomber killed three people and injured at least 23 others in 16 bomb blasts.

He was dubbed the Unabomber because his targets were generally **u**niversities and **a**irlines.

Mr Kaczynski pleaded not guilty to 10 bomb-related charges, including the murders of Sacramento computer shop owner, Hugh Scrutton, in 1985 and timber industry lobbyist, Gilbert Murray, in 1995, the Unabomber's last victim.

Kaczynski was also charged in New Jersey over the 1994 bombing death of an advertising executive, Thomas Mosser. Mr Kaczynski also pleaded not guilty to that charge.

During the almost two-decade manhunt, the US Federal Bureau of Investigation went through hundreds of suspects, thousands of interviews and 20,000 phone calls to its toll-free number without success.

Authorities say Mr Kaczynski was unmasked by his own words. In 1995, following the death of Murray, the Unabomber said he would stop killing if the New York Times and Washington Post published his 67-page anti-technology 'manifesto'.

When the article appeared, Mr Kaczynski's younger brother, David, thought the writing similar to some of Ted Kaczynski's earlier writings. He reluctantly told authorities of his suspicions.

After surveillance of Mr Kaczynski's cabin outside the small mining town of Lincoln, Montana, he was arrested. A search uncovered a copy of the Unabomber's manifesto and a freshly made bomb.

Officials also found diaries detailing some of the bombings. One entry, cited in prosecution court papers, referred to the blast that killed Mr Scrutton on December 11, 1985:

"Experiment 97. Dec. 11, 1985. I planted bomb disguised to look like scrap of lumber behind Rentech compute (sic) store in Sacramento. According to San Francisco Examiner, Dec. 20, the 'operator (owner? manager?) of the store was killed, 'blown to bits,' on Dec. 12."

Legal experts say that given the evidence against the defendant, Kaczynski's lawyers are unlikely to say that he is innocent.

"This not a whodunit case. It's more of a 'why did he do it?' case," said Joshua Dressler, a professor at McGeorge University law school in Sacramento.

Kaczynski's lawyers have indicated they intend to pursue a "diminished capacity" defence to show that their client is a paranoid schizophrenic who was mentally incapable of forming the criminal intent to commit murder.

A critique of his ideas & actions.



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