

Unabomber used library at UC Davis?

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Unabomber used library at UC Davis? By James Richardson and Cynthia Hubert
April 10, 1996 Librarians at the University of California, Davis, recently handed over to the FBI a book found in their stacks with handwritten markings around text that closely paralleled some of the Unabomber's manifesto, UC sources said Tuesday.

The book "The True Believer," by Eric Hoffer, raised the possibility that the Unabomber may have used the UC Davis library for researching and writing at least part of his 35,000-word anarchistic manifesto.

Last week the FBI arrested Theodore Kaczynski, 53, a Harvard graduate and former Berkeley math professor who has been living in a tiny Montana cabin since the 1970s. Agents found one live bomb in the cabin.

Kaczynski is being held on a single charge of possessing bomb components, but federal sources have said they are certain he is the Unabomber and more charges will follow.

Meanwhile, the search of Kaczynski's cabin continued to yield new evidence.

Federal sources told The Bee that agents have found a list of categories of individuals who may have been future bombing targets — including executives and social climbers. Specific individuals were not named.

"He obviously did not plan to keep his promise (to cease bombing)," a federal source said. Portions of the manifesto also were found in the cabin, a source said. During the nearly 18 years of bombings, three people were killed and 23 injured. After the last bombing, which claimed the life of Sacramento lobbyist Gilbert Murray, the Unabomber promised to stop killing if national publications printed his manifesto.

The Washington Post last year printed the manuscript and the bombings ceased. The manifesto is a wordy, academic-sounding essay with footnotes and consecutively numbered paragraphs condemning technology and industrial society.

UC sources said that someone reading Hoffer's book at UC Davis in February noticed it was marked — not an uncommon condition for university library books. But the marked sections seemed familiar to the library patron, who then checked it against the Unabomber's manifesto and found similarities.

"It raises the possibility that he was not only a bomber, but a plagiarist," said one university source.

Federal sources said they have no firm evidence that the Unabomber suspect, Kaczynski, studied at the UC Davis library but that collecting the book was one of many leads they have pursued.

UC Davis library records do not show who checked out a book once it is returned. Nor would someone need to check out the book to read it in the library.

Hoffer, a San Francisco longshoreman-turned-philosopher and essayist who died in 1983, was a cultural icon of Bay Area intellectuals when Kaczynski was teaching at Berkeley in the late 1960s. Like the Unabomber, Hoffer consecutively numbered paragraph groupings in "The True Believer," published in 1951.

Hoffer's book and the Unabomber's manifesto parallel each other in subject and phrasing. Both wrote about hatred, fanaticism, "true believers," the power of "mass movements," the French and Russian revolutions and the development of modern Asia.

Hoffer sometimes led an itinerant life working as a migrant worker in California, and he held library cards in many towns.

Kaczynski also appears to have been an itinerant at times, and FBI agents have been checking libraries where he may have visited, including at UC Berkeley.

The marked copy of Hoffer's book was turned over to the FBI by UC Davis. Investigators have previously said that Hoffer's book was one of those they have been studying for Unabomber clues.

Federal sources have said they are amassing evidence that Kaczynski, who lived like a hermit in Montana, traveled to Northern California and stayed for weeks or months at time.

Meanwhile, the Sacramento County District Attorney's Office today will convene a "task force" of local agencies interested in prosecuting Kaczynski.

Deputy District Attorney John O'Mara said that Sacramento prosecutors are not pushing to take over the case from federal authorities. He said that officials of the Sacramento police and county sheriff's departments have been invited to the meeting.

"I suspect we may never have the opportunity to do this prosecution," said O'Mara. "But we need to be ready."

Two of the three killings from the bombs were in Sacramento— businessman Hugh Scrutton in 1985 and lobbyist Murray in 1995. O'Mara said that if the Sacramento prosecutors get the opportunity, they will seek the death penalty against Kaczynski. But O'Mara said that the county can do nothing to take over the case without cooperation from the federal government.

The move by the Sacramento DA's office could further complicate the jurisdictional tangle that federal authorities tried to sort out Monday in Washington, D.C.

Federal prosecutors from New Jersey, Connecticut, Illinois, Massachusetts, Montana, Utah and Sacramento, including U.S. Attorney Charles Stevens, met but reached no decision on where Kaczynski should be prosecuted.

Stevens could not be reached for comment Tuesday.

While the federal prosecutors have been talking about how to proceed next, Gov. Pete Wilson has called for local prosecutors to take over the case.

Wilson's press secretary, Sean Walsh, said, "The governor believes the federal government can't give him (Kaczynski) the maximum penalty and California can."

One of the arguments that state prosecutors can make is that California's death penalty law is relatively settled in the appellate courts, and three executions have been carried out in recent years.

By contrast, the federal death penalty law was enacted in 1994, and no one has been executed under it.

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