

Kaczynski Trial Halted as It Begins

Various

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The judge stops proceedings after the Unabom defendant asks to make a statement - reportedly to complain about his lawyers and to protest his brother's presence in court.

UNABOM SUSPECT THEODORE Kaczynski, apparently determined to air publicly his frustrations with defense lawyers who have sought to defend him as mentally defective, brought the opening day of his trial on federal bombing charges to a halt.

"I want to make a statement," Kaczynski said as the Sacramento, California, courtroom came to order. He held a manila envelope in his hands, telling US District Court Judge Garland Burrell that he wanted to read something he had written. He said he wanted to "address the issue of my attorneys," the Associated Press reported.

Burrell immediately cleared the jury from the courtroom and summoned Kaczynski and his court-appointed attorneys, Quin Denvir and Judy Clarke, to an in-chambers meeting that stretched to more than four hours. The judge emerged from the meeting to tell jurors to go home for the day and to return to court Thursday morning.

The subject of the in-chambers meeting was unknown, but the Associated Press quoted an anonymous source as saying Kaczynski wanted to raise complaints about his lawyers and to protest the presence of his brother, David Kaczynski, in court. David Kaczynski's tip led the FBI to arrest his elder brother in April 1996.

The elder Kaczynski, a former University of California, Berkeley, math professor, is on trial for four of the 16 bombings attributed to the Unabomber between 1978 and 1995. Two people died and two were seriously injured in the attacks for which Kaczynski is charged.

Denvir and Clarke, facing what appears to be a tightly woven government case based on written and other physical evidence seized in 1996 from their client's Montana cabin, made no secret of their intention to try to persuade a jury that their client was mentally incapable of forming the intent to commit the crimes.

The tactic was aimed not so much at convincing the jury of the defendant's innocence as at avoiding the death penalty sought by prosecutors.

Kaczynski, who in a November jury-selection hearing threw a pen in apparent frustration at hearing his emotional state discussed, has reportedly opposed that strategy. His objections led to the December meetings with Burrell and to a decision announced late last month that Denvir and Clarke would not use their planned defense.

Reuters contributed to this report.

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