

FBI agent describes Order founder Mathews' violent last-ditch stand

By RORY MARSHALL
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SEATTLE — Order founder Robert Mathews fought off FBI agents by shooting through a ceiling in his waterfront hideout and continued firing as the house burned to the ground, an FBI agent testified Thursday.

James Jay, head of the FBI's Seattle SWAT team, told of Mathews' final, violent hours on Whidbey Island on Dec. 8 as agents surrounded him and tried to capture him.

The testimony came during the federal racketeering trial of 10 alleged members of the white supremacist group Mathews founded and led until his death.

The defendants and 13 others allegedly ran a 1½-year crime campaign that included two murders, more than \$4 million in robberies, arson and counterfeiting. Prosecutors claim their Nazi-like goal

was to establish an Aryan homeland without Jews, racial minorities and "white traitors."

Jay said he and agents surrounded Mathews' house north of Seattle early in the morning of Dec. 7. It was not until the afternoon of Dec. 8, after negotiations with Mathews produced no results, that Jay and four other agents entered the ground floor of the two-story house.

"We were told to ascertain the condition of Mathews. The command post didn't know whether he was alive or dead," Jay said.

Tear gas had been fired into the house earlier and Jay said he told one of the agents to go outside and get a gas mask for a dog handler who was having trouble breathing.

At that point, "we received automatic weapons fire from upstairs, coming through the ceiling ... then zigzag across the floor and through the walls," Jay said.

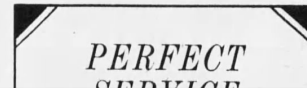
Mathews, who was on the second floor, fired 20 to 30 shots striking

within a foot of agents below, he said. Jay said he directed agents to fire short bursts in return through the ceiling in an attempt to get Mathews to move away.

When agents tried to open the door to the stairs, Mathews fired another six or seven shots and the agents fled the house at about 2:30 p.m., Jay said.

A few hours later, a helicopter turned a floodlight on the house and illumination flares were fired into the structure. The house caught fire from the intensely hot white phosphorus flares, but Mathews appeared at an upstairs window and began firing at the helicopter, Jay said.

As agents returned fire, Mathews moved to a corner of the house and began shooting at them, he said.



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