

8-A—The Greenville News—Wednesday, November 7, 1979

## Greensboro shootout under intense FBI scrutiny

GREENSBORO, N.C. (UPI) — The FBI said Tuesday half its agents in North Carolina are investigating Saturday's deadly shootout between Communists and members of the Ku Klux Klan and the state Nazi party.

Five people were killed and 10 injured when a group police say were Ku Klux Klansmen and Nazis opened fire on a Communist Workers Party USA-sponsored march in the Morningside Homes housing project.

Cecil E. Moses, assistant special agent in charge of North Carolina, said about 40 agents have been assigned to the case.

"It's a very intensive, broad investigation," Moses said, adding he plans to send an interim report on

the incident to the Justice Department by early next week.

Moses said the probe is focusing on who organized the bloody assault.

"Was it organized or were these individual acts the result of individual people acting individually?" is the central question of the investigation, he said.

The probe will include a review of the Greensboro police department's handling of the incident, Moses said.

Moses denied charges made by the small communist group that federal agencies were behind the attack. He called the charges "ridiculous."

Meanwhile, Greensboro police, noting shots came from both sides, were trying to reconstruct the shooting scene.

Although the five dead were all members of the Workers Viewpoint Organization, also called the Communist Workers Party U.S.A., police said the communists returned fire after the Klansmen and Nazis began shooting at the staging area for a communist "Death to the Klan" march.

"There was an exchange of gunfire between the two groups," said Police Captain James Hilliard.

He would not elaborate on what weapons had been confiscated, however.

The Workers Viewpoint Organization has said it will hold a march Sunday, to be followed by services for four of the five victims, but residents of the area in which the weekend shootout occurred said Tuesday

their lives should not be endangered by future marches through their neighborhood.

"We plead with all groups to hold your marches and demonstrations away from our homes and our families," said Mrs. Ruth Beasley, president of the Morningside resident's council.

Mrs. Beasley said the communist group has little support within the housing project.

Fourteen men are being held without bond in the deaths.

Hilliard said police are attempting to reconstruct the crime scene as part of their investigation into charges by the Workers Viewpoint Organization that the attackers knew specifically who they wanted to kill.

WVO members claim all of the dead were leaders of their organization.

Hilliard said he didn't know why some of the attackers were not killed by the Communist Workers Organization fire. One Klansman was among the wounded.

Harold A. Covington, state commander of the National Socialist Party of North Carolina, said in Raleigh the Klansmen and the Nazis began shooting in self-defense, adding it was obvious why none of them was killed.

"There is a qualitative difference between white men, Vietnam veterans and New York Jews and nigger-poolroom hoods," Covington said. "Our guys were former soldiers,

they shot straighter and knew what to do."

A Ku Klux Klan leader, in an interview published in the University of Connecticut newspaper, said KKK members who fired on the communists were only defending themselves and the Klan is "very happy the incident occurred."

"In North Carolina no one had the right to shoot at us and we were only defending ourselves," Bill Wilkinson, imperial wizard of the Invisible Empire, said.

Wilkinson said in a telephone interview from New Orleans "the public is becoming more aware of the mistreatment of the Klan and because of this we are getting more support."

Clipped By:



jerriwilliamsauthor  
Sun, Apr 14, 2019