

NEBRASKA

Extremist groups' threats fueling concern of FBI

By Mike Mulvey
State Bureau

The FBI has stepped up its investigation of Nebraska extremist groups because of fear over the groups' growing militancy and increased threats against the general public and government officials.

A year ago, the FBI assigned for the first time an agent to work full time with the Nebraska State Patrol to investigate extremist groups such as the Posse Comitatus, whose more radical members are considered potentially violent, said John Evans, assistant special agent in charge of the FBI's Omaha office. Another FBI agent from the Omaha office conducts similar investigations full time in Iowa.

"That shows our concern," Evans said.

Fueling that concern is a dramatic rise in threats and assaults against Internal Revenue Service agents. Last year, 955 such incidents were investigated nationally, more than double the 455 incidents reported in 1981.

Although long in existence in Nebraska, extremist organizations have gained notoriety here recently with passage by the Legislature of a law banning paramilitary training and the murder trial of two members of a Rulo religious survivalist camp. The Rulo group, now disbanded, had ties with the posse.

Four members of the Rulo camp were sentenced to prison this week for their involvement in the torture-slaying of their one-time friend, James Thimm, 26.



During the past decade, the posse — a militant, anti-tax group — has been among the most active in Nebraska of the many far-right organizations.

The FBI's concern over, and investigation of, the posse is detailed in 1,835 pages of FBI documents the Sunday Journal-Star obtained through a request filed under the federal Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

According to the documents, regional FBI offices identified the potential for posse violence shortly after the group formed in 1973. Officials today say some members of the posse and related groups are as dangerous as ever.

The FBI records contain little on posse activities of the past few years because that information still is con-

sidered classified and not available under FOIA. Nonetheless, the reports obtained paint a picture of heavily armed, angry posse members who, though often in disarray, espouse racist and violent anti-government views.

Posse members are opposed to any law enforcement other than the local sheriff and are critical of the Federal Reserve System, the U.S. courts and laws they say subvert the Constitution. Group members vehemently oppose income taxes.

An FBI memorandum details incidents in which posse members assaulted, threatened and harassed law officers, judges and IRS agents. The FBI justifies its investigation of the posse, in part, because of a perceived threat against federal officials.

One FBI report noted: "The movement's boldness and disregard for the laws of this country demonstrated the great potential for violence."

FBI reports indicate the bureau long has investigated various posse chapters and has monitored rallies and conventions attended by far-right militants.

"The (far-right) movement itself doesn't concern the FBI," said Evans of the FBI's Omaha office. "Those people have a right to believe what they want to believe."

Evans said, however, the FBI becomes concerned when those individuals threaten or commit violence.

"People can make a lot of rhetoric," he said. "But if
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