

Summary

Operation Lone Wolf

In recent years, San Diego County experienced a dramatic increase in the volume of hate related crimes and incidents. The three major symptoms included:

- Places of worship and other religious buildings were being vandalized
- Racist fliers/ literature were being regularly distributed throughout the county
- Prominent members of the community, who spoke out against hate crimes, were being threatened and targeted based on their race, religion, and national origin

It was believed the core problem was these hate crimes were committed in furtherance of White Supremacist beliefs and goals.

In October of 1998, the San Diego Police Department investigated a hate crime case where the Director of the Anti-Defamation League had been threatened at his residence. The investigation revealed one of the potential suspects associated with a well-known White Supremacist leader, Alex Curtis. It was believed Curtis was orchestrating the avalanche of hate crimes in our county.

The San Diego Police Department, in partnership with the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI), began researching and analyzing activities involving Curtis and his group. Their tactics included targeting prominent community leaders and religious locations. Curtis spread his beliefs and promoted racial violence via his web site, his newspaper, printed literature/ hate fliers and two telephone hotlines. Curtis established affiliations with National and International White Supremacist leaders and groups and was recognized as one of the top six leaders in the country. '

The statistics in San Diego confirmed the volume of hate crimes were increasing. This led to escalating community concerns. The Police Department and FBI, working in concert with local Jewish community leaders and other groups, conducted a two-year operation designed to stop Alex Curtis and his network of hate. The goals of the partnership were to arrest Curtis and his cell members and to send a strong message to hate groups that the community will band together to stop the hate.

The use of several investigative tactics brought Curtis and his cell to justice. They were all federally arrested, charged and Curtis recently pled guilty.

The strong partnerships formed during these two years has had a lasting impression on how hate crime is addressed locally. There are now hate crime experts at each area station, strengthened by monthly meetings and training. The religious community has stronger ties to law enforcement officers. The true measure of success has been the dramatic decrease in hate crimes and incidents subsequent to the arrests.

SCANNING

In recent years, San Diego County experienced a dramatic increase in the volume of hate related crimes and incidents. The core problem was these hate crimes and incidents were conducted in furtherance of White Supremacist beliefs and goals. The three major symptoms of the hate crime activity were:

- The targeting of prominent members of our community and other citizens based on their race, religion, national origin or political position.
- The targeting of places of worship and religious buildings.
- The distribution of racist hate fliers/ literature throughout the county.

The sources of information, used in identifying this problem, were police reports, information from citizens, community leaders and groups, elected officials and information from the Internet.

Several prominent public figures in our community who opposed or spoke out against hate crime activities were targeted. Among the people targeted were San Diego Anti-Defamation League (ADL) Director Morris Casuto, United States Congressman Bob Filner, City of La Mesa Mayor Art Madrid and Director of Heartland Human Relations and Fair Housing Clara Harris.

Commencing in 1993, San Diego ADL Director Morris Casuto, who is Jewish, was victimized by a series of hate crimes at his residence and at the ADL Office. In April of 1993, Casuto received a threatening letter. This letter included statements like, "We will kill you" and "We will burn down the ADL's headquarters." In November of 1997, a large sticker bearing a Nazi swastika was placed on the front door of the Casuto residence.

On April 19, 1998, the anniversary of Adolf Hitler's birthday, a birthday cake was left on the front porch of Casuto 's residence. The cake was decorated with a swastika and had three

candles with the numbers 109, signifying Hitler's one hundred-ninth birthday. Attached to the cake box was a helium balloon with a picture of the "Grim Reaper." Refer to Supporting Documents, page 1.

During August 1999, stickers bearing Nazi swastikas were placed on road signs near Casuto's residence. These stickers were strategically placed on stop signs on the driving route taken by Casuto, when traveling to work.

During December 1999, Morris Casuto received several threatening telephone messages on his answering machine at the ADL. These messages were meant to intimidate and terrorize Casuto and urged him to leave San Diego.

On numerous occasions between 1997 and 1999, large quantities of anti-Semitic stickers and/ or fliers were distributed in the parking lot of the local ADL building. On one occasion, feces were smeared on the door of the ADL office.

During May of 1997, Congressman Filner, who is Jewish, had two hate crime incidents occur at his office. These incidents involved the placement of threatening anti-Semitic stickers on the windows and walls of his local Community Congress Office. On several other occasions, Filner was targeted with hate fliers. These stickers and hate flyers displayed Nazi swastikas and messages including, "Yabba Dabba Do, Kill Every Jew" and "Hitler Was Right." Refer to Supporting Documents, page 2.

During January of 1997, La Mesa Mayor Art Madrid, who is Hispanic, publicly denounced hate crime activities, which had occurred in his city. Several days later, racist fliers were left on the front lawn of Madrid's residence. These fliers contained hate messages including, "Get Out! Beaner Scum."

During August of 1997, an anti-Semitic sticker was placed on the front door of Madrid's residence. The sticker depicted a hooded Klansman pointing his finger. The accompanying text read, "I want you for the Ku Klux Klan." Later the same month, a box with a red bow was left on the front porch of Madrid's residence. The box contained an inactive hand grenade. Refer to Supporting Documents, page 2.

Commencing in 1997, Clara Harris was targeted at her residence and place of employment. Harris' job included assisting minorities secure housing without being discriminated against.

On several occasions racial hate fliers and stickers were left at Harris' place of employment. Harris was also targeted at her residence. On one occasion, a large sticker displaying a Klansman was placed on her bedroom window.

In addition to hate crime incidents involving the targeted individuals, two San Diego Jewish Synagogues were vandalized with spray painted swastikas and other anti-Semitic slogans.

In June of 1997, Tifereth Israel Synagogue was vandalized. Swastika symbols and the following words were spray painted on the exterior walls of the building: "Die Jew Boy"; "Fuck Jews" and "Get Out Kike." In December of 1998, Temple Adat Shalom was vandalized. Swastika symbols and phrases like "Back to Israel" and "Get out" were spray painted on the front doors and walls of the building. Refer to Supporting Documents, page 3.

In January of 2000, a Molotov-cocktail incendiary device damaged a San Diego Jewish Synagogue.

Between January 1999 and December of 2000, masses of racist hate fliers were distributed, on a regular basis, throughout San Diego County. There were 216 reported incidents of hate flier distribution citywide, during this period. These hate fliers commonly displayed a

telephone number linked to a pre-recorded racist message advocating White Supremacy and racial violence. A typical hate flier distribution incident involved the dissemination of hundreds of little racist flyers, strewn on city streets, covering up to a five-block radius. Communities inhabited by minorities were the preferred target areas. The phrases printed on the flyers were usually applicable to the targeted area. Refer to Supporting Documents, page 4.

Analysis

In 1993, Alex Curtis, a self professed White Supremacist, was convicted of sending the previously mentioned threatening letter to Morris Casuto. In November of 1998, a latent fingerprint was lifted from the hate sticker that had been placed on Casuto 's door. The print belonged to one of Curtis' associates. These acts linked Curtis to the targeting of Casuto and Northern Area Investigators initiated an investigation. We evaluated and analyzed the following factors relating to the offenders and the victims.

Alex Curtis: The Person

Commencing in 1993, Alex Curtis launched a campaign to spread his beliefs and views in a variety of ways. Thomas Metzger, a nationally known leader in the White Supremacist movement, became Curtis' mentor. Curtis became an avid follower of Metzger's principles and echoed his beliefs and goals regarding White Supremacy. Their shared beliefs called for the targeting of individuals based on their race, religion or national origin. Curtis adopted Metzger's theory of Lone Wolf Activism. This theory called for operating as an individual or in a small cell, to commit crimes and/ or racially motivated acts in furtherance of their White Supremacist beliefs and goals. This working theory strongly discouraged telling anyone about your activities. This would decrease the potential for identification and apprehension by law enforcement.

Curtis strongly opposed Jewish people, the United States government and any person who was not of Aryan (White) decent. He believed the Jews controlled the government and law enforcement and were responsible for murdering the White race. He believed a racial holy war (*Rahowa*) would be necessary to ensure the existence of the White race in the future.

Curtis' Cell Group

Alex Curtis recruited four trusted, key cell group members. His group included a 53-year-old security guard named Robert Morehouse, and three unemployed Skinheads in their early twenties, named Michael DiSilva, Kevin Holland and Walter Kuttner. All of these subjects shared similar qualities. Morehouse is a Vietnam veteran, who was disgruntled with the government and became a hard-core racist. Based on his military experience, Morehouse was very familiar with weapons and explosive devices and possessed several firearms, including two Uzi rifles.

Morehouse was seeking a local White Supremacist leader to direct and control his racially motivated activities. The three Skinheads were misguided and impressionable youths, who lacked direction in their lives. Curtis motivated these subjects to commit criminal acts, which he orchestrated. Curtis also directed them to target specific individuals and religious locations.

Curtis' Targeting Tactics

As a high school student, Curtis strongly opposed "race mixing." To target individuals he believed fit this criteria, Curtis broke into the administrative office of his school and stole the student rosters. He proceeded to write letters to students who maintained friendships and or relationships with minorities. He sent these threatening letters directly to the students, at their parents' residences.

Curtis began to target individuals throughout the county based on their race, religion and national origin. He focused on targeting businesses owned and operated by Jewish people. He vandalized these businesses and sent threatening letters to the owners.

Curtis wished to increase his exposure and his preferred targets became prominent public figures and elected officials. He selected targets who opposed and/ or spoke out against White Supremacist activities. His first target was Morris Casuto.

Curtis began with writing life-threatening letters to Casuto and soon escalated to other intimidating acts. All of these targeting tactics intimidated and terrified Casuto, his family and his coworkers. This prompted Casuto to obtain a permit to carry a concealed weapon for his protection.

Curtis also targeted other public figures and/ or elected officials using similar techniques, as discussed in the Scanning Phase. Curtis' targeting tactics became more intense and violent-prone. An example is the inactive hand grenade left the front porch of Madrid's residence. This incident proved to be traumatic and very intimidating to Madrid and his family. These targeting tactics caused Mayor Madrid to fear for his safety. His children urged Mayor Madrid to resign from public office.

Clara Harris was so intimidated by these acts, she would alter her daily schedule and request friends to accompany her home to check the interior of her residence.

Additionally, Curtis routinely gathered intelligence information about his targets and Jewish synagogues. His tactics included trash runs at the ADL Office and infiltrating meetings and speeches at various synagogues.

The Impact of Curtis' Crimes on the Community

Curtis' hate crime tactics were very unique in that there was rarely a singular victim. These types of acts, and the accompanying messages they sent, typically victimized an entire community.

The staff and congregation of Tifereth Synagogue and Temple Adat Shalom were devastated by the damage done to their places of worship. In both cases, the congregations viewed the horrible symbols and words when they arrived to worship at their synagogues on the day following the incidents. The images of swastikas on the walls of their synagogues prompted recollections of the Holocaust and the family members who lost their lives based solely on their religious beliefs. These events proved to be traumatic and follow up interviews revealed the effects on the staff and congregations were long lasting.

Curtis' Racist Telephone Hotlines

Curtis developed and maintained two "racist telephone hotlines." One was a daily message and one was changed weekly. His hotline phone numbers were printed on all of his hate fliers, which prompted people to call. These hotlines promoted racial violence toward all minority groups and law enforcement. Refer to Supporting Documents, page 5.

A large volume of people from around the world called these racist telephone hotlines and listened to these messages. Many of the parents from the San Diego community had legitimate concerns regarding their children or other young people calling these racist hotlines and being influenced by these strong racial messages.

Hate Literature

As one of the tactics to spread his "message", Curtis and his cell group members distributed and circulated racist hate fliers throughout San Diego County on a regular basis. These flyers contained messages like, "Hitler was right"; "A Good Jew is a Dead Jew" and other anti-Semitic slogans, comments and pictures.

Curtis developed and copied thousands of these hate fliers prior to distribution. He printed his racist telephone hotline number on these fliers. Curtis strategically printed messages and slogans for the ethnic part of the community, which he was targeting. These fliers were responsible for offending and/ or intimidating San Diego's minority population and caused serious concerns in these communities.

Curtis also strategically distributed fliers in areas inhabited by mostly White people. This recruiting tactic prompted curious individuals to call the hotline and learn about the "movement."

The distribution of these fliers created resource problems for the police department. For each incident, patrol officers were dispatched and were responsible for reporting the incident and recovering every one of the fliers for potential evidence. This created a great deal of out of service time for patrol officers.

Curtis On The Internet

Curtis became proficient on the Internet and used this as a tool to spread his message worldwide. He used his web site to continue to target public figures and to recruit others into the "movement."

He also used his website to encourage others to commit criminal acts in furtherance of their racial beliefs. He routinely provided advice regarding techniques and tactics for targeting minorities and public figures. One of the graphics on Curtis' website was a "Point System for

Targeting Minorities." This system awarded points for targeting minorities and additional points for targeting public figures and elected or government officials. The website posed a significant concern as Curtis was capable of motivating others, on global level, to commit violent acts.

Curtis' Publication

Curtis possessed extremely articulate and persuasive writing skills. Curtis developed and maintained a monthly racist newspaper titled, "The Nationalist Observer." He owned and operated this business from his home and was the editor of the paper. He also used this means to spread his message, recruit others and encourage followers to commit acts that support the "movement." In this paper, Curtis added editorials to make comments and suggestions on how to rectify the racial problems. Curtis' newspaper had a very large circulation both nationally and internationally.

Curtis also authored the "White Activist Handbook." This publication offered explicit directions relating to targeting individuals and locations. In his publications, Curtis printed a "White Power Strategy for San Diego" and consistently made violent-prone, racial statements. Refer to Supporting Documents, page 5.

Curtis: A National Leader In The Movement

By utilizing all of the previously discussed means, Curtis became a National leader in the White Supremacist Movement. The established leaders in the "movement" developed a great deal of respect for Curtis based on his intelligence, ambition and devotion to the cause. Curtis used this new found "fame and power" to influence and motivate others to support the movement in any way possible. Based on his rapid advancements, Curtis was recognized by the Southern Poverty Law Center as one of the top six White Supremacist leaders in the country. 1

¹ Southern Poverty Law Center, Intelligence Report, Fall 1999, Issue 96

Curtis' Alliances

Curtis' exposure and National following led to the development of strong alliances with the following National and International White Supremacist and Skinhead groups and organizations: Aryan Nations; National Militia Groups; White Aryan Resistance; National and International Skinhead groups; World Church of the Creator; National and International KKK factions; and many other leaders and groups in the White Supremacy Movement.

Curtis' network with established White Supremacist groups posed a serious threat to public safety in San Diego County, as well as nationwide. Curtis endorsed and supported these established groups on his website and in his publications. The mutual support strengthened the unity between him and the other groups.

Curtis' Links To Violence

As Curtis exposure grew in magnitude, so did his links to racial violence. Curtis maintained ties with the leader of the World Church of the Creator, Matt Hale. In July of 1999, one of Hale's disciples, Benjamin Smith, went on a shooting spree and shot eleven victims, before killing himself. These shootings were based on his White Supremacist beliefs.

In June of 1999, Matthew and James Williams burned down two synagogues in the Sacramento, CA. area. In July of 1999, the Williams brothers killed two gay males in Redding, CA. All of these acts were based on their White Supremacist beliefs and goals. A follow-up investigation revealed Curtis and the Williams brothers corresponded prior to the murders. The Williams brothers had circulated Curtis' hate fliers in Redding and viewed Curtis' website and downloaded a great deal of his racist material prior to the murders.

Curtis maintained ties with the Aryan Nations. In the past, Buford Furrow was employed as a security guard for the Aryan Nations compound. On August 10, 1999, Furrow shot five

victims at a Jewish Center and then shot and killed a postal worker. These actions were based on Furrow's White Supremacist beliefs and visions. Refer to Supporting Documents, page 6.

Curtis: Impact On Youth

Curtis continuously attempted to recruit young White males into his movement. He would strategically spread racist hate fliers on and around the grounds of elementary, middle and high schools. He keyed on schools attended by mostly White students. He commonly printed his website address on these fliers. Young, vulnerable and impressionable students would visit his website and potentially communicate with Curtis via e-mail messages. In light of the recent school violence, this issue posed a significant concern.

Hate Crime Statistical Data

The number of hate crime cases in San Diego for calendar year 1998 was 113. In 1999, the number increased to 251 cases. The cases for calendar year 2000 were 229. This proved to be a very significant statistic, as the increase was due in large part to Curtis' activities and his mentoring of others.

The number of reported incidents of hate flier distribution in San Diego in 1999 was 132. The number of incidents for calendar year 2000 was 84.

The significance of this statistical data, in terms of decreasing numbers, will become more evident in the Assessment Phase of this project.

Overall Analysis

Approximately 14 months were spent on the Analysis Phase of this project. All of the previously discussed issues were discovered and carefully analyzed. The consensus of the San Diego Police Department (SDPD) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) was Alex Curtis and his cell members posed a significant threat to members of the San Diego communities.

We met with the FBI and discovered the Federal statutes and sentencing guidelines relating to civil rights violations were rather significant. Additionally, with enough probable cause, the FBI can obtain a Title III (wire tap) to monitor phone calls and conversations. We elected to conduct a joint investigation with the FBI. This case was dubbed "Operation Lone Wolf."

GOALS

One of the short-term objectives was to gather intelligence. We utilized physical and electronic surveillance in order to determine the size and members of the Curtis cell. We also used surveillance to potentially gather enough evidence for a Title III. Another short-term objective was to recruit an informant to potentially infiltrate the Curtis group. We knew this infiltration would be extremely difficult based on their Lone Wolf theory. Additionally, White Supremacists and Skinheads typically do not cooperate with law enforcement. We knew the best candidate for an informant is an individual who had a criminal case pending or was already in custody, pending sentencing.

Our first long-term goal was to arrest and prosecute Alex Curtis and his cell group members for civil rights violations. The second goal was to send a strong message regarding San Diego law enforcement's stance on hate crimes and civil rights violations.

RESPONSE

With the assistance of our Crime Analysis Unit, we developed a 500-name database of suspected White Supremacists and Skinheads residing in San Diego County. From this database, background and record checks were conducted on each subject. This yielded a Target List of 38 active parolees, 39 probationers, 7 subjects with felony warrants and 31 subjects with misdemeanor warrants.

We conducted several operations over a four-month period in which we targeted subjects from our list. These operations resulted in 12 arrests, of which eight of these subjects were sentenced to prison. Based on the new charges, two subjects decided to cooperate and became informants.

One subject, who had a pending criminal case, provided specific information and evidence against Curtis relating to one of our vandalism cases. Another informant was able to befriend Morehouse and infiltrate the group. Through his contacts with Morehouse, we obtained specific information relating to Curtis' criminal enterprise. This led to enough evidence and probable cause to obtain a Title III. Through wiretaps and a concealed microphone, we were able to monitor three telephone lines and a microphone in a key location. This was the first Title III in the history of the FBI for a civil rights violation and ran continuously from January through March of 2000.

The evidence obtained from the Title III led to enough probable cause to arrest one of the cell group members. He cooperated and provided information on open cases we knew about, as well as additional cases. He provided sufficient information to indict Alex Curtis and another cell group member for Federal felony counts. The Grand Jury indicted Alex Curtis for three felony conspiracy counts and other misdemeanor counts. Michael DaSilva was indicted for felony conspiracy and other misdemeanor counts.

On November 9, 2000, we arrested Alex Curtis for the charges specified in the indictment. In light of the evidence, on March 16, 2001, Alex Curtis pled guilty to three felony counts and is awaiting sentencing. Additionally, two of the other group members pled guilty to Federal charges.

ASSESSMENT

This project was very successful in terms of reaching all of the short and long-term goals. We were able to arrest and prosecute Alex Curtis and the members of his cell group.

Through these arrests, we were successful in sending a very strong message on a National level regarding our stance on hate crimes and civil rights violations. This was accomplished through the extensive amount of National media coverage this case received.

The accomplishments resulting from Operation Lone Wolf were felt widespread throughout the San Diego community. The relationships and partnerships between the police department and community leaders, elected officials, religious groups and other members of the community were tremendously enhanced by the success of this operation.

The significance of the statistical data indicates Curtis and Morehouse had a direct impact on the number of hate crime cases and hate flier incidents. On August 10, 2000, Robert Morehouse was arrested and on November 9, 2000, Alex Curtis was arrested. The number of hate crime cases for the last quarter of 2000 (October - December) dropped to 28. This represented a fifty percent decrease from the previous quarter. Refer to Supporting Documents, page 7.

The total number of hate flier distribution incidents for 1999 was 133. The total number of incidents for 2000 was 84. Subsequent to Morehouse's arrest, there were only 3 incidents in August, one incident in September and no incidents during the period of October through December. Refer to Supporting Documents, page 8.

There were additional accomplishments resulting from this problem solving effort. Our agency established a database of over 500 names of suspected White Supremacists and

Skinheads. This information can be utilized for future operations and can assist with the identification and arrests of subjects for future hate crime cases.

During the course of this investigation, the assigned detectives provided training relating to the investigation and enforcement of hate crimes. This training was given to patrol officers and other investigators in our agency. Additionally, investigators throughout the county were trained on these issues. This training resulted in the development of new procedures and protocols for investigating hate crimes.

This training proved to be significant in a hate crime case that occurred in San Diego in July of 2000. This case involved five migrant workers, who were assaulted by eight white juveniles, based on their ethnic backgrounds. The procedures and protocols, which were established as a result of the training provided during Operation Lone Wolf, simplified the processing and resolution of this case.

During Operation Lone Wolf, one detective in each of the department's area stations was designated as the hate crime investigator. This created a hate crime expert at each area station to investigate cases occurring within their division, as well as to provide ongoing hate crime training to officers. The Countywide Hate Crime Investigators Group was established and regular meetings are now routine.

The benefits of Operation Lone Wolf have proved to have a lasting impact on how San Diego law enforcement agencies view, respond to and investigate hate crimes.