

House of Yahweh has ties to anti-government group Posse Comitatus

Abilene Reporter-News

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Four men tied to the militant, anti-government Posse Comitatus of Wisconsin are elders or guards in the House of Yahweh.

One of them, Andrew Glick, is involved in the sect's security force in Abilene while three others, David Mrotek, Dave Heimerman and Donald Stenz, operate a House of Yahweh branch in Manitowoc County, Wis., near the Posse's birthplace.

All four have been associated with Posse Comitatus, Wisconsin law officials said.

While House of Yahweh followers and spokesmen have consistently denied to the media that anyone with the sect is associated with the Posse, two of the men have now confirmed their involvement but insist they regret their days with the white supremacist group.

"It's a stigma that never goes away," said Stenz, a carpenter in Manitowoc, Wis.

Glick, 49, who apparently is the only one of the four who has relocated to Abilene, claims he left the Posse in 1985, "never to return to them or their teachings."

He has changed his name to Nasayah Yisryal Hawkins, though Taylor County officials are investigating whether the name change is legal because Glick was convicted of a Posse-related felony in Wisconsin a decade ago. Texas law forbids felons from changing their names.

Mrotek, Heimerman and Stenz come to Abilene primarily for the thrice-yearly House of Yahweh feasts, the sources say.

The Reporter-News, working with the Green Bay Press-Gazette in Wisconsin, has looked into ties between the two groups. The Green Bay paper is publishing a story stating Posse Comitatus members have joined a "doomsday cult" in Abilene.

Abilene Police Chief Melvin Martin confirms his department is watching the situation closely.

"We have concern with any extreme right-wing groups, whether they're under the guise of religion or what have you, and we want to monitor them," Martin said. "Yeah, we do have concerns."

Wisconsin law officials say the Posse has dispersed in recent years, changing its name to Family Farm Preservation. Some members have joined similar groups, such as the Montana Freeman.

"I don't know how dangerous they're going to be, but I know they're having more activity down there in Texas," said Sgt. Robert Bowman of the Shawano County Sheriff's Department in Wisconsin.

Asked if the Posse members were considered dangerous during their active years, Bowman said, "You didn't turn your back on them."

BURIED GUNS

Ever since news of a rift in the House of Yahweh developed early this year over Pastor Yisryal Hawkins' teachings, former elders and followers of the sect have mentioned the involvement of those associated with the Posse.

These ex-communicants, however, refuse to speak on the record about the Posse members out of concern for their own safety and because they say their disagreements are principally with Yisryal Hawkins.

But officials with the Shawano County sheriff's department in Wisconsin have confirmed the names of Mrotek, Glick and Heimerman appear in police intelligence files related to Posse activity. Mrotek, in particular, was once the "right-hand man" of Posse founder Jim Wickstrom, said former Shawano County Sheriff's Sgt. Larry Roth. The group espoused white supremacist views, conducted paramilitary training drills and advocated anti-government activities and tax evasion.

In 1985, officials said, a number of Posse members were driven off a Shawano County, Wis., compound where they had buried guns, bomb-making equipment and 70,000 rounds of ammunition.

Wickstrom now lives in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and recently told reporters militia groups "are not going to go away - it's all coming to a head and nothing will stop it."

Mrotek, meanwhile, became associated with the House of Yahweh through the Abilene sect's growing outreach program of tapes, publications and radio and cable broadcasts.

Former elders and security men with the sect have consistently maintained Mrotek brought guns and ammunition to Abilene, where they were packed in barrels with Cosmoline lubricant and buried underground, supposedly so they'd be available to protect buried food supplies.

The guns were moved, to a location unknown, in 1993, following the Branch Davidian raid in Waco, the sources say, because Yisryal Hawkins feared an FBI raid against his own sect. Mrotek could not be reached for comment.

Mrotek, Glick and Heimerman's current involvement with the sect is obvious by their decision to follow Yisryal Hawkins' teachings that all followers should change their last names to Hawkins to "bring glory to our Heavenly Father Yahweh." Almost 200 people in Taylor County alone, including Glick and Heimerman, have obtained name changes in less than a year.

Meanwhile, Mrotek changed his name in February in Manitowoc, Wis., his hometown. Unlike most followers, who biblicize their full names, Mrotek changed his to David Israyl Mrotek Hawkins.

SLANDER OF TITLE

Questions have been raised about Glick's name change because of his Wisconsin record. He was convicted of criminal slander of title, a felony punishable by up to two years in prison. He served six months in Manitowoc County Jail.

Criminal slander of title is one of the so-called "Posse" statutes enacted by the Wisconsin Legislature in response to litigation by the organization that flooded local courts.

Posse members, for example, would place frivolous or fraudulent liens on the property of county officials with whom they had run-ins, said Chief Investigator Gene Kusche with the Manitowoc County sheriff's department.

"It sure tied up people's property," he said, "so the state in its infinite wisdom passed a law against it."

In Glick's case, he and several other Posse members were accused of filing declaration of land patent and declaration of homestead papers that Manitowoc County Prosecutor Denis Vogel called "false, a sham or

frivolous."

The documents claimed the men were entitled to have original federal land patents updated in their names, nullifying all transactions on their property since the land patents were issued more than 100 years ago.

In his appearance before the court, Glick declared he was indigent because the judge "stole my property and my home away from me."

Although Glick, in his response to questions last week, claimed he was convicted without benefit of an attorney, Wisconsin records show he refused the court-appointed lawyer.

When he filed for a name-change late last year in Taylor County, Glick reported in a sworn statement that he had no felony conviction. District Attorney James Eidson said he is investigating the circumstances around the conviction and the name change. Conceivably Glick could be charged with perjury.

Glick, however, said he had believed the conviction was now off his record and that he is trying to correct his mistake.

CONSTITUTION PARTY

Both Glick and Stenz also have political backgrounds related to the Posse. Both ran for the Wisconsin Assembly in 1982 from different districts under the Constitution Party.

Glick called for an end to state funding for abortion and replacing the state Department of Natural Resources with local conservation departments governed by local citizens.

"The power should be brought back to the local township where it came from," he told the Green Bay Press Gazette at the time. "If the people of the U.S. would only wake up, they would hang every bureaucrat from a tree."

Stenz called for state government overhaul, especially of the Department of Natural Resources, and return of more power to local control. He also told the Press-Gazette that aliens living in the Manitowoc area were causing a great amount of unrest.

Today, Stenz says his association with the Posse was "stupid" and that he lost his building contracting business because of dealings with the group. He also served 60 days in jail in 1986 for failing to file income tax returns.

Though he declined to say if he has changed his name to Hawkins, Stenz says he attends the House of Yahweh in Manitowoc, where Mrotek and Heimerman advertise themselves in the local paper's religion section as elders.

Unlike the House of Yahweh sanctuary in Callahan County, the building in Manitowoc is not tax-exempt. Stenz said he and the other followers did not want it to be considered a "tax dodge."

Still, at least one Manitowoc businesswoman contacted said the House of Yahweh is not highly thought of by locals.

"It's not the kind of people I'd like to go to church with," she said, refusing to give her name. "It's Posse people."

As have other followers, Glick denies many of the rumors surrounding the House of Yahweh in Abilene. He insists guns are not allowed and that all followers are taught to be peace-loving and to turn away from violence, anger and hate. He also said the security force is an unarmed neighborhood watch, looking out for vandalism.

Nonetheless, ex-members say the sect applied four years ago to the Texas Board of Private Investigators and Private Security Agencies to have its 18-man guard commissioned as private security agents, certified to carry

firearms. The application was denied.

And while a "no firearms" sign is prominently displayed at the entrance to the Callahan County compound, numerous former followers say one current member is now certified as a state instructor to train and provide certification for people wishing to carry concealed handguns.