

## Court bombed to stop drug trial

**Police say ex-convict thought he could avoid cocaine charges by having building blown up.**

VALLEJO, Calif. (AP) — An ex-convict surrendered Monday to face charges he masterminded bombings at a courthouse and a bank to thwart a drug trial that could put him away for life under California's "three strikes" law.

The explosions last week destroyed three cash machines and blasted a crater in the side of the Solano County Courthouse wall. No one was injured.

Authorities said Kevin Lee Robinson, 29, had hired several men to disrupt the Solano County court system, where he was to go on trial Monday on cocaine charges.

The bank was bombed to throw detectives off the trail, investigators believe.

Police said the conspirators amassed more than 500 pounds of stolen dynamite, which is closely regulated and can be traced to its legitimate owner.

If convicted of the drug charge, Robinson would face a mandatory 25 years-to-life sentence under California's "three strikes" law, which applies to three-time felons. Robinson has a history of drug and weapons convictions.

Six men have been arrested, including Robinson and two others arrested Monday and three men on Sunday. Police said more were expected. Police didn't say how much the men were paid to carry out the bombings.

On Jan. 25, children had found 30 sticks of dynamite in a rucksack at the county library, which houses some

police evidence in its basement. On Sunday morning, investigators found more than 60 sticks of wired dynamite in the trunk of a car parked outside an apartment complex. They speculated it was intended for a second assault on the library.

On Sunday evening, police stormed a house and found 500 pounds of dynamite and a semiautomatic rifle in the garage. Authorities said the explosives could have leveled much of the neighborhood.

Federal agents said they were still searching for another cache of explosives, possibly up to 100 pounds.

Orlando Johnson, 30, was arrested Monday for investigation of a parole violation and an explosives charge. Jason Pascual, 22, also was arrested, although investigators have not said what charges will be filed against him.

## ABA: Stop executions

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — Complaining of unfairness, the American Bar Association urged a nationwide moratorium on the death penalty Monday despite opposition from its own president and the Clinton administration.

The ABA's House of Delegates, which makes policy for the nation's largest group of lawyers, voted 280-119.

Leaders of the 370,000-lawyer organization were told that current death-penalty systems are marred by unfairness and racial injustice.

One supporter, Washington lawyer Estelle Rogers, said the organization was not taking a position on the death penalty itself. Instead, she said, "We're calling on every jurisdiction ... to clean up its act."

Neither the federal government

nor any state has in place a system of capital punishment that meets the ABA's standard of fairness, she said.

The resolution was approved following a 45-minute debate during which a high-ranking Clinton administration lawyer and the ABA's current president urged defeat of the measure.

Deputy Attorney General Jamie Gorelick voiced concern that the resolution, which becomes the focus of ABA lobbying efforts in Congress and state legislatures, would affect pending cases involving domestic terrorism.

The government has decided to seek the death penalty for two men accused in the bombing of an Oklahoma City federal building, and is considering doing so in the Unabomber case.

## Santee casino stands proud

BY ROBYNN TYSVER  
Associated Press

SANTEE — A year ago, Bobby Bickerstaff Jr. had never seen his name in a telephone book and Theo Bearing had never had a "real job."

Both were single parents on welfare.

Today, the two Ohiya Casino employees are among 17 members of the Santee Sioux Tribe who landed jobs on a reservation with 75-percent unemployment.

Since the disputed casino opened Feb. 2, 1996, the tribe has paid about \$200,000 in wages, said Thelma Thomas, casino manager.

"The point of the Ohiya Casino is not to get wealthy, but to provide employment for our tribal members," Thomas said.

"It's devastating to live in a community where only a handful of people work," she said. "You would be amazed how many don't have telephones."

Bickerstaff, 31, never did. He used his father's telephone and borrowed money he couldn't pay back. Then, he was hired at the casino as a security guard and began to learn the joys of a paycheck.

He has purchased an entire bedroom set for his 4-year-old daughter and hopes to stock the room with a computer by the end of the year.

"I look forward to buying things on weekends," he said.

Bickerstaff worries that his good fortune will end and the casino will be forced to close. But for now, he enjoys his paycheck.

"It still feels good to have a phone and call people you need to," he said.

### Casino could close

The possibility of closure looms in

"The point of the Ohiya Casino is not to get wealthy, but to provide employment for our tribal members."

THELMA THOMAS  
casino manager

the future. U.S. Attorney Tom Monaghan was involved in a year of efforts to close the casino. Along with other federal and state officials, Monaghan argues that the casino is illegal because the tribe has no gaming agreement with the state.

After three major courtroom battles, a two-month shutdown and a closure order from the National Indian Gaming Commission, Ohiya Casino remains open. But Monaghan has not said whether he will appeal a federal judge's December decision not to order it shut down. Monaghan did not respond to several interview requests.

The casino's opening and continued existence have made conquerors of the once-dispirited Santee Sioux Indian Tribe — one of the tiniest members of the Sioux nation.

"It's put this tribe on the map," said Richard Thomas, tribal chairman and brother-in-law of Thelma Thomas. "It lifted our spirits, it lifted our hopes."

Still, the tribe expects the court battles to continue and does much of its business as if it is under siege.

"We have our own way of storing our money," Thomas said with a smile. "We don't use the bank."

The federal government seized about \$87,000 from a tribal account in South Dakota in April in an effort to put an "economic squeeze" on the tribe and force the casino to close. The

tribe responded with its own lawsuit and secret accounts.

The tribe plans to improve the casino by secretly bringing in Las Vegas-style slot machines that dish out money rather than just tally player "credits."

### Neighbors are sympathetic

The tribe's struggles have garnered sympathy among its white neighbors in Knox County.

"They know it's real tough getting a job down there," said Sheriff Wes Eisenbeiss. "Those people are poverty-stricken, there's no doubt about that."

The sheriff said crime has declined since the opening of the casino, which does not serve alcohol.

School Superintendent Chuck Squier notices the casino's impact in another way.

"We have some kids having new coats and their folks are driving up and dropping them off in new vehicles," he said.

Gamblers at the isolated casino said if it wasn't there, they would go to one of the many casinos that surround Nebraska in South Dakota, Iowa, Kansas and Colorado.


"It's like drinking or anything else," said Wayne Hill of Niobrara. "Nobody forces you to come down and spend your money."

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