

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Precedence: ROUTINE

Date: 12/05/1997

To: ✓OPCA

Attn: John E. Collingwood,
Inspector In Charge

Criminal Investigative

Attn: Color of Law Unit,
SSA Denny Burkhead

From: Oklahoma City
Squad 1

Contact: SAC Thomas M. Kuker, 405/290-3601

Approved By: Kuker Thomas M

Drafted By: Mabry John P: kls

Case ID #: [REDACTED] (Pending) - 8

Title: ESTATE OF KENNETH MICHAEL TRENTADUE,
by CARMEN AGUILAR-TRENTADUE,
PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE;
ET AL VS UNITED STATES OF AMERICA;
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE;
ET AL

Synopsis: Documentation regarding a meeting on December 4, 1997, between SAC Thomas M. Kuker, SSA John P. Mabry, and SA Tom Moon Eng Linn, FBI Oklahoma City, and Senator Don Nickles, Republican-Oklahoma, regarding the 1995 death of inmate Kenneth Michael Trentadue at the Federal Transfer Center in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

Administrative: Reference SAC Thomas M. Kuker, Oklahoma City Division, telephone call to IIC John E. Collingwood, OPCA, on December 3, 1997.

Details: On December 4, 1997, at 8:00 a.m., SAC Thomas M. Kuker, Oklahoma City Division, accompanied by SSA John P. Mabry and SA Tom Moon Eng Linn, met with Senator Don Nickles, Republican-Oklahoma, at the Senator's Oklahoma office located at 409 South Boston, Tulsa, Oklahoma, 74103. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss certain issues regarding the death of inmate Kenneth Michael Trentadue at the Federal Transfer Center in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, which occurred on August 21, 1995.

This meeting was approved in advance by FBIHQ, Office of Public and Congressional Affairs, on December 3, 1997, in referenced phone call.

For information, Senator Nickles visited the Federal Transfer Center the previous day, December 3, 1997, accompanied by Oklahoma City FBI agents and Bureau of Prison personnel. Agents opened Trentadue's former cell, Cell 709A, for inspection

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by the Senator and his staff. During the inspection, Senator Nickles directed several questions to FBI and BOP personnel. Representatives from both agencies responded they had been instructed by FBIHQ and DOJ not to discuss the case. Incensed by this response, Senator Nickles held a press conference afterwards outside the FTC in which he denounced BOP, FBI and DOJ for their lack of cooperation with his office.

During the December 4, 1997, meeting at Senator Nickles' Oklahoma office, the following issues were discussed:

♦ Senator Nickles advised he had been briefed regarding this case by the following individuals: Oklahoma Medical Examiner Dr. Fred Jordan; former Federal Transfer Center (FTC) Warden Thomas Kindt; Oklahoma County District Attorney Bob Macy; Jesse James Trentadue, brother of the decedent; and Jack Bowen, a television news reporter with Channel 25, FOX, in Oklahoma City (Bowen's reports have emphasized cover-up and incompetency in the investigation, and have relied on information provided by Jesse Trentadue and the Medical Examiner's Office). Senator Nickles advised that these briefings by the aforementioned individuals, as well as photographs provided to him, and his visit to the FTC, had raised serious questions in his mind whether the death of Trentadue was a suicide or homicide.

♦ Senator Nickles was advised by SAC Kuker that the FBI was cooperating with the Oklahoma County District Attorney's Office in their investigation of this matter, and planned to release all materials gathered in this investigation once authority to do so had been obtained. SAC Kuker also advised Senator Nickles that it was his understanding that Chief U.S. District Court Judge David Russell, Western District of Oklahoma, had signed an order authorizing release of federal grand jury materials to Mr. Macy.

♦ SAC Kuker related to Senator Nickles that when he transferred to the Oklahoma City Division and first viewed the Trentadue photographs he also had serious concerns regarding the manner of death. SAC Kuker explained that these questions, in his mind, were answered by the extensive investigation which was undertaken in this case, and that he was now convinced Trentadue's death was a suicide.

♦ SAC Kuker then related to Senator Nickles the depth of the investigation, including numerous

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interviews of guards and inmates regarding specific issues such as Trentadue's state of mind, the reasons he was moved to the Special Housing Unit (SHU), and his behavior while confined there.


♦ SAC Kuker and Senator Nickles discussed the results of the autopsy report and the cause of death which was listed as "Traumatic Asphyxia." SAC Kuker also advised Senator Nickles of the results of blood spatter analysis conducted by an expert with the Oklahoma City Police Department. SAC Kuker emphasized that at this stage of the investigation, there was full cooperation amongst the agencies involved in this investigation, which included the FBI, the Medical Examiner's Office, the Oklahoma City Police Department, and outside experts.

♦ SAC Kuker then reviewed for Senator Nickles the contents of a letter from Oklahoma Medical Examiner Dr. Fred Jordan to United States Attorney Patrick M. Ryan, Western District of Oklahoma, regarding the results of his completed autopsy report in the case of Kenneth Michael Trentadue. This letter was dated on February 26, 1996. In that letter, Dr. Jordan stated that the cause of death was "Traumatic Asphyxia" and the manner was "Unknown." Dr. Jordan referred to the blood spatter expert with the Oklahoma City Police Department as an individual whom he holds in the highest esteem, and indicated this expert's opinion was that there was no evidence to support the presence of any other individual in the cell at the time Trentadue died. The expert concluded that the blood stains present were consistent with movements that could be expected from the inmate inflicting wounds upon himself and then securing the fabric noose on the grill to hang himself. In this same letter, Dr. Jordan commended the recent work of Oklahoma City FBI Special Agent Tom Linn. He noted that SA Linn gathered information previously unavailable to his office, which was instrumental in allowing the Medical Examiner's Office to bring some type of conclusion to the matter.

♦ SAC Kuker answered a number of specific questions raised by Senator Nickles regarding the death scene, photographs, lacerations and contusions on the body, and characteristics of the ligature. SAC Kuker also explained to Senator Nickles the various items of evidence submitted to the laboratory, and the results of those laboratory tests. This conversation included details regarding the blood evidence, and the fact that

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the blood found on various items was determined to match Trentadue's. SAC Kuker acknowledged that one item of blood evidence, a sheet, was putrefied due to improper packaging, but the integrity of the other blood items was not affected.

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At the conclusion of the meeting, which lasted 1 hour and 45 minutes, Senator Nickles advised that it would be his decision whether a Senate inquiry into this matter would be conducted. He indicated that, at this point in time, he was not inclined to initiate such a review. He stated that he would contact the Oklahoma Medical Examiner's Office and encourage them to meet with the FBI to review all the evidence in the case. He also indicated he looked forward to Oklahoma County District Attorney Bob Macy's review of this matter.

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Senator Nickles thanked the FBI for taking the time to meet with him regarding this matter, and he expressed dismay at the Department of Justice's reluctance to allow the FBI to brief him earlier. SAC Kuker emphasized to Senator Nickles that the FBI would be glad to meet with him and/or his constituents in the future to answer any further concerns regarding this investigation.

For information of FBIHQ, on December 5, 1997, Oklahoma City Division learned that on or about December 3, 1997, Senator Nickles was also briefed on this case by Joe Heaton, Acting United States Attorney, Western District of Oklahoma. Mr. Heaton's briefing of Senator Nickles was with the approval of DOJ.

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