

FBI may have found body of missing atheist

CAMP WOOD, (AP) — Federal agents unearthed human bones on a remote South Texas ranch Saturday, the FBI said, after returning to the site with the chief suspect in the disappearance of missing atheist leader Madalyn Murray O'Hair and two of her children.

"We have what appears to be a leg bone, maybe a femur, that is of substantial size and appears to be cut off on one end," said Roderick Beverly, special agent-in-charge of the FBI's San Antonio division. "We also found what appears to be finger bones and parts of a hand."

"The bones appeared to be charred like they were set on fire."

Burnt fabric was also found buried with the bones.

Investigators believe O'Hair, her son and the granddaughter she had adopted were killed, dismembered and dumped on the 5,000-acre Cooksey Ranch in 1995. Previous searches of the property, including one in 1999, failed to find any bodies.

Beverly would not comment on whether David Roland Waters participated in Saturday's search. Waters, who was facing kidnapping and extortion charges in the case, struck a deal with investigators Wednesday that was ordered sealed by a federal judge in Austin.

But a law enforcement source who spoke to the Associated Press (AP) on condition of anonymity confirmed that Waters was taken to the ranch Saturday. His two lawyers also were present.

About two dozen federal and state agents using

three cadaver dogs began scouring a spot about 15-feet-by-15-feet near a grove of live oak trees shortly after arriving at the ranch around 10:30 a.m.

Internal Revenue Service agents, Texas Department of Public Safety troopers, Texas Rangers and local sheriff's deputies helped in the search on the private ranch in the Texas Hill Country about

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120 miles west of San Antonio.

The bones were revealed by agents using shovels and picks to dig about 2.5 feet down, Beverly said.

Beverly said a forensic anthropologist on site from Southwest Texas State University determined that the bones are human. The remains will be examined at the anthropologist's lab in San Marcos, Beverly said.

Beverly said the search would continue into the night.

The 53-year-old Waters, who previously pleaded innocent in the case, was to have gone on trial

next week.

The AP has objected to U.S. District Judge Sam Sparks' decision to close the plea agreement at the request of defense attorneys. A hearing has been set for Monday.

In 1999, about 100 investigators brought heavy digging equipment, a helicopter and dogs to the area in an unsuccessful search for the bodies.

O'Hair, 77 and suffering diabetes and heart disease when she disappeared, enjoyed calling herself the most hated woman in America. She was involved in successful court battles in the 1960's to ban prayer and Bible-reading in the nation's public schools.

O'Hair, her son Jon Garth Murray and her granddaughter Robin Murray O'Hair left their Austin home in August 1995 under mysterious circumstances. Breakfast dishes were still on the table and O'Hair's medication was left behind. The family's beloved dogs were left at the house.

The trio was later seen in San Antonio but dropped from sight along with about \$500,000 in gold coins from one of O'Hair's atheist organizations.

Prosecutors contend the victims were dismembered at a public storage shed in Austin, placed in 55-gallon drums and dumped on the ranch property under Waters' directions. He worked as O'Hair's office manager before being convicted of stealing \$54,000. He is now serving 60 years in prison.

Last August, Sparks sentenced Gary Paul Karr, 52, a former jailmate of Waters, to life in prison for extorting money from the O'Hair family.

News in Brief

Waco student threatens classmates with gun

WACO, (AP) — A state judge has ordered a Waco fifth-grader to undergo a psychological evaluation after police said the youngster demanded oral sex from a girl at gunpoint.

The 12-year-old boy then threatened another student, telling him, "This is your day to die," said district Judge Ralph Strother.

Strother on Thursday ordered the youngster detained for at least 30 days, during which time he'll be examined by psychologists.

Strother will have a hearing with the boy in 10 days to determine whether he should remain in custody or returned to his parents.

On Wednesday, police took the boy into custody on suspicion of making a terroristic threat and deadly conduct after school police found an unloaded, small-caliber handgun above a ceiling tile in a school bathroom.

The boy, who attends Bell's Hill Elementary School, told police that he and a friend found the gun in an alley.

Escapees' leader to plead guilty

DALLAS (AP) — George Rivas,

mastermind of the escape of seven inmates from a Texas prison, told a Dallas television station on Saturday he thinks he should be executed for killing an Irving policeman during a robbery of a sporting goods store.

"I do not even know where to begin," Rivas said to a question from WFAA-TV whether he has anything to say to the family of slain officer Aubrey Hawkins.

"No amount of apologies could make up for what I have done," Rivas said. "Except that I hope that by me now confessing to this and admitting to my guilt, I can give them some sort of closure when my life is taken," Rivas said.

His interviewer asked him what

punishment he should receive.

"The death sentence; I deserve what I can get," Rivas said.

He said he will plead guilty.

Bill proposed to change voting

AUSTIN (AP) — Those hanging chads that plagued Florida's election were not a factor in Texas elections this past year. And if one lawmaker has his way, they never will be.

State Rep. Dale Tillery is proposing a bill seeking to ban the use of punch-card voting systems — the kind that can leave hanging chads.

"We need to stop using a Third World technology," said Tillery.

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