

Atlanta Journal

"COVERS DIXIE LIKE THE DEW"

9

Atlanta, Ga. 30302, Friday Evening, September 23, 1977

74 Pages—4 Sections

IN '63 CHURCH BOMBING

Alabama After Stoner

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Alabama authorities are investigating avowed white supremacist J.B. Stoner of Marietta and several other persons in connection with the 1963 Birmingham church bombing that killed four young black girls.

An Alabama source close to the investigation confirmed Friday that Baxley's office is investigating Stoner, a leader of the racist National States Rights party, and others in Georgia and Alabama.

The office of Alabama Atty. Gen. William J. Baxley is expected to present evidence in the bombing case to a Jefferson

County grand jury next week. The source said he does not know whether indictments would be sought against Stoner.

Stoner, contacted at the party headquarters in Marietta, said he is aware Alabama authorities have been investigating him in connection with the 1963 bombing, but called the probe a "publicity stunt by that nigger-lovin' Bill Baxley."

"He's running for governor of Alabama next year and he wants to impress the nigger bloc vote."

Baxley is not an announced candidate for governor but is expected to run next year.

Stoner, who has racked up thousands of votes in campaigns to be Georgia governor, lieutenant governor and U.S. senator on an anti-black, anti-Jewish platform, denied any involvement in the 1963 bombing.

An Alabama source familiar with the evidence expressed misgivings that their case was strong enough to win indictments or subsequent convictions.

He said the long passage of time since the bombing 14 years ago, and the reluctance of suspects to cooperate with authorities, dilutes the strength of their case.

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Convictions would be difficult, he said, "without somebody turning state's evidence."

Baxley's office also presented evidence in the bombing case during the last term of the Birmingham grand jury, but no indictments were handed down.

Stoner said Baxley's people have made "no effort to talk to me" and said he would not comply with any subpoena to testify before the grand jury, should one be issued.

"I'll fight it all the way," he added.

"Baxley has no evidence. I'm innocent," Stoner said. He claimed that now-deceased Alabama lawyer Matt Murphy, who specialized in defending Ku Klux Klansmen in civil rights cases, told him the FBI set up the Birmingham bombing.

"They hired the janitor (at the church) to do it, and hid him out of the state," Stoner claimed.

The FBI is a pet hate of

Stoner; his organization contends the federal bureau perpetrated acts of racial violence to discredit segregationists.

Stoner was in Birmingham during the fall of 1963 when racial violence erupted throughout the big steel town as a result of federal school desegregation orders.

He and Edward Fields, a Marietta chiropractor who is publisher and editor of the party newspaper The Thunderbolt, were among eight white men indicted by a

federal grand jury for obstructing the integration of city schools at the time.

Stoner said Friday the 1963 indictments were dismissed by U.S. District Judge Clarence Allgood of Birmingham. He claims it was because attorneys for the defendants presented evidence that the grand jury was stacked with blacks and liberals.

The bombing was investigated extensively at the time by federal authorities, but no indictments were ever returned.

The Birmingham police department is cooperating in the current bombing probe, Alabama sources said, with at least two city policemen aiding in Baxley's investigation.

Stoner switched his extremist political party's base from Birmingham to Savannah Beach, Ga., late in the '60s and to Marietta at the beginning of this decade.

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