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Vigilante Link In Bombing of Tucson Mafia

TUCSON — (UPI) — After a year of trying to place the blame elsewhere, authorities have concluded that one or more Old West style vigilante groups trying to drive out the Mafia may be responsible for a series of bombings here.

During a preliminary hearing for two men accused of detonating two bombs at the home of Mafia kingpin Joseph (Joe Bananas) Bonanno on July 22, 1968, the former girl-friend of a brother of one of the accused testified she had been told by the two defendants that an agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation had asked the two men to bomb Bonanno's home.

She said she was told the agent wanted to start a war among Mafia factions in Tucson so they would drive each other out of the city.

She identified the agent only as "Dave."

The next day FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover sent a special investigator here to look into the charge. Hoover also said that the agent involved in the allegation no longer worked for the bureau.

Several days later, however, it was learned that the agent had quit his FBI job the day before the court testimony.

Then acting Police Chief William Gilkinson revealed the Bonanno bombing and several others in the past 12 months may have been the work of a vigilante group.

'Well Known People'

Without naming names, Gilkinson said when the investigation was completed "there are going to be a lot of people involved that you would never suspect in a situation such as this. A lot of well known people are going to have to answer."

One of the other witnesses at the July 12 preliminary hearing was Salvatore "Bill" Bonanno, son of Joseph Bo-

nanno.

He testified that he had been guarding his father's home and saw one of the two bombs come flying over the rear patio wall. He said he was knocked off his feet by the explosion, but managed to get one shot off with his shotgun and was sure he hit one of the two bombers.

Several days later, the younger Bonanno said he had conducted a private investigation into the bombings of Mafia members' homes and businesses.

He said his sources, which he refused to identify, had indicated that a law enforcement officer or organization was behind the blasts, at least at the planning stages.

'On National Level'

He did not specifically accuse the FBI, but said that from his information he believed the agency behind the bombings had to be on a national level. But, he added that he thinks one or two individuals are involved—not the entire agency.

Unofficial but reliable sources within several law enforcement agencies have said that at least three elements appear to be involved in the bombings.

At the top of the structure apparently is a group of community leaders.

A loosely knit group of lower echelon local hoods apparently was employed to carry out some of the bombings.

The third element involves the underworld itself, the apparent target of the attacks.

The bombs appear to have been skillfully placed so as not to cause physical harm. Most of the business bombings occurred after working hours.

Most of the residential bombings occurred when the occupants were away. If the bombs were detonated while somebody was in the house or business, they were always placed so as not to injure anyone.

As one police official said, "When the Mafia bombs something, you can be sure that it won't be just a patio wall or the roof of a building with a couple of sticks of dynamite."

Several law enforcement officials say they believe it will take several more months to complete the case, but they promise a shock once the facts are revealed.