

FBI Agents Slain in S.D.

Were Chasing Pickup Truck

By Joel D. Weisman

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CHICAGO—Two FBI agents killed on an Oglala Sioux reservation June 26 were pursuing a pickup truck immediately before the shootout that claimed their lives, a tape of their last words indicates.

The FBI and local authorities have said the agents came to a hamlet on the reservation about 12 miles west of Pine Ridge, S.D., to see if persons named on warrants issued in a kidnaping case were present.

Clay Brady, an FBI spokesman in Pine Ridge, confirmed in a telephone interview Tuesday that "they were after a truck."

The South Dakota law enforcement communication department tape-recorded radio conversation between the slain agents, who were in separate cars, and also recorded their plea to FBI bases after the gunfire began.

South Dakota Attorney General William Janklow, whose office oversees the law enforcement communication network, acknowledged that the state did record the FBI conversation, but declined to say what was on the recording. He said the FBI had asked him to keep the information confidential.

However, it was learned the conversations recorded included an exchange between the two slain agents, Ronald A. Williams and Jack R. Coler, in which one agent advocated pursuit of a red pickup truck.

The other told his partner to make sure the gas tank was full.

Then after approximately two minutes of silence, one of the agents was recorded say-

ing, "Contact Pine Ridge [an FBI radio point]. We're taking hits."

It is unclear from the tapes, which agents said what, or precisely where the chase of the truck began.

The dead agents' cars and their bodies were found less than a half mile from the main highway, U.S. 18. Thus they could have either begun the chase on the main highway and then been led onto the private Indian land, the FBI spokesman said, or they could have been on the Indian land looking for the suspects, have seen the truck take off, and begun following it.

The FBI spokesman said there was "no particular reason" the truck incident was not announced earlier.

"It certainly was no secret," he said, speculating that perhaps the incident was not made public because it is still not known where the chase began or ended.

The fact that a truck chase was involved also was disclosed in an affidavit filed by the U.S. attorney's office in Rapid City as the FBI sought to justify the need to arrest David Sky, 31, who lives on the reservation, as a "material witness" to the shootout. Sky was arrested June 30.

In the affidavit the U.S. attorney said the truck the agents were chasing "matched the description" of one in which a suspect in a June 24 kidnaping and assault case was seen riding.

The kidnaping warrant named Teddy Paul Pourier, 32, Hobart Horse, 26, James Theodore Eagle, 19, and Herman Thunder Hawk, 24, as being responsible for the kidnap-

ing and assault of Jerry Schwarting and Robert Dunsmore on June 24.

The four allegedly held Dunsmore and Schwarting overnight against their will, struck them and kept their boots, one FBI official said.

While the FBI has declined to confirm it, the slain agents reportedly had information that Eagle was in the red pickup truck.