

# **In the Matter of Kenneth Michael Trentadue Part IV - Medical examiner feared government**

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By J.D. Cash, Fourth in a series  
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Editors note: We have placed calls to the Dr. Jordan's office requesting an interview on this subject. His press spokesman said that the doctor no longer discusses the Trentadue case with members of the media.

Oklahoma's Chief Medical Examiner Fred Jordan, M.D., was a very worried and nervous man for years after he autopsied the remains of Kenneth Michael Trentadue.

In Jordan's long career as the state's medical examiner, his record had been a good one - marked with accolades for his abilities in solving many difficult cases. Indeed, Jordan was deeply respected by his peers and the law enforcement community. Even most criminal defense lawyers practicing in Oklahoma believed Jordan and his staff labored hard and their work was unbiased.

The year of 1995, though, tested Jordan and his staff as few medical examiners' offices around the world had ever been tested.

On April 19, Jordan's office arrived at the bombed-out remains of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building to begin the process of establishing positive identifications for 168 bodies, several mangled beyond easy recognition after a 7,000-pound truck bomb was set off in front of the nine-story structure.

Shortly after that gruesome task was accomplished the bloody and heavily bruised body of 44-year-old Kenneth Trentadue arrived from the new Federal Transfer Center where the inmate had been held on a parole violation for only three days.

Prison officials surmised the inmate had committed suicide by hanging, after beating himself repeatedly and cutting his throat.

After carefully examining the body, Jordan was convinced it was murder. And since the prison admitted Trentadue was being held in isolation, away from other prisoners, that turned the spotlight directly on federal workers.

Cover-up began immediately

At the very beginning of his department's investigation into the August 21, 1995 brutal death, the FBI and the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) refused to cooperate. An investigation by the Department of Justice Inspector General would later report outrageous examples of perjury and mishandling of evidence in the case.

Officials at the Oklahoma City Transfer facility initially barred Jordan's investigators from the cell after the body of Kenneth Trentadue had been found. And the FBI later admitted their agents misplaced or destroyed critical crime scene evidence they received in their own investigation.

Jesse Trentadue summarized his experiences with federal agencies working on the case this way: "The government accused everyone of wrongdoing. They even accused us of having mutilated my brother's body and said that Kenney killed himself because he had AIDS. (Jordan proved he did not)

"The government was especially concerned about the Medical Examiner's Office because of all the evidence we were providing to Dr. Jordan and his Chief Investigator Kevin Rowland. In fact, we were the source of most of the evidence the Medical Examiner's Office received since they were getting nothing from the government, not even cooperation.

"The government infiltrated and/or controlled every "investigation" into Kenney's death. And if it could not do that, the government interfered with those investigations by destroying or withholding evidence. I now see that from the minute Kenney drew his last breath, the government reacted like some wounded animal using all of its strength, powers and resources to protect itself."

### Jordan under pressure

Echoing many of Jesse Trentadue's conclusions, during a rare interview for Fox News on July 3, 1997, Dr. Jordan bared many of his own concerns as he publicly called for a county grand jury investigation into the bizarre death of Kenneth Trentadue. The remarkable exchange opens with Jordan pointing the finger at the federal government as the culprit in the murder and cover-up.

"I think it's very likely he (Kenneth Trentadue) was murdered. I'm not able to prove it. I have temporarily classified the death as undetermined. You see a body covered with blood, removed from the room as Mr. Trentadue was, soaked in blood covered with bruises, and you try to gain access to the scene and the government of the United State says no, you can't.

"They continue to prohibit us from having access to the scene of his death, which is unheard of in 1997, until about five months later. When we went in there and luminated, it lit up like a candle because blood was still present on the walls of the room after four or five months. But at that point we have no crime scene, so there are still questions about the death of Kenneth Trentadue that will never be answered because of the actions of the U.S. government.

"Whether those actions were intentional - whether they were incompetence, I don't know - it's not easy to communicate with the federal government. It was botched. Or worse, it was planned."

The huge problem created for Jordan and his staff was the government cleaned up the cell where they said Trentadue killed himself. Adding to suspicions, the medical examiner's office was kept away from the cell for five months.

During this time, Jordan would later learn that a huge volume of evidence in the case disappeared and some was destroyed. Key witnesses interviewed by authorities would subsequently admit they initially lied to federal investigators and grand jurors, as well.

The victim's brother, Jesse Trentadue, told this newspaper, "At first we pinned so much hope on Dr. Jordan. He seemed sincere to us. He knew Kenny did not kill himself, but had been killed. He promised our family he would never give up on this case until he found the truth. He also promised he wouldn't buckle under all the pressure he was being hit with by the FBI.

"The government desperately needed Jordan to rule the case a suicide so they could stop a grand jury and other federal investigations from going forward. Jordan was the key they needed to close the case and he wouldn't."

In notes obtained by this newspaper, an FBI agent reported the medical examiner's original stalwart position that Dr. Jordan was: "A loose cannon." And furthermore, the FBI agent noted, "The medical examiner's findings will probably rule that the death was a homicide."

Growing nervous by FBI agents repeated attempts to pressure him to rule the case a suicide, Jordan began contacting officials he believed would help him.

After the United State's Attorney General, Janet Reno, refused his phone calls, Jordan was successful in getting the attention of U.S. Attorney Patrick Ryan in Oklahoma City, after he told one of Ryan's assistants that Trentadue was probably killed by persons employed by the federal government.

During the exchange, Ryan says he will pursue the case and take Jordan's evidence before a federal grand jury.

Despite these assurances, the FBI continued to pressure the Oklahoma medical examiner to declare the inmate's death a suicide. Desperate for protection from government retribution, Jordan began contacting other officials about his fears.

An example of Jordan's concerns are reflected in a letter to the Commissioner of the IRS, Margaret Milner Richardson.

Dated Aug. 25, 1997, the letter said: "The requirements of my job as Chief Medical Examiner for the State of Oklahoma are frequently currently bringing me into an uncomfortable juxtaposition with the United States Department of Justice.

"In order to protect myself from retribution I would like information as to how to request a protective audit from your agency. By this, I simply mean a standard audit in order to avoid having your agency used to harass me as I proceed with my inquiries into a death that directly relates to the Federal Transfer Center in Oklahoma City."

As the FBI continued to pressure Jordan in 1997, the medical examiner also sought political protection from various elected officials.

Jordan fights back

In a handwritten memo obtained by the McCurtain Daily Gazette, Jordan records the highpoints of a telephone call he made to North Dakota's United States Senator Byron L. Dorgan.

Explaining his difficult situation, the ME noted that he told the senator that the Trentadue investigation had been "... crippled by the federal government and that Kenneth Trentadue was at the least beaten before he died." Jordan added: "Reiterated my lack of trust in the federal government; things inside the D.C. beltway; and the Dept of Justice in particular."

With the Department of Justice at this time mired in a civil suit with the Trentadue family, lawyers in the civil division of the Justice Department appeared to be using the FBI to pressure the medical examiner into changing his ruling.

Also casting long shadows over the matter, several important senators had begun asking questions and threatening Janet Reno with a full Senate Judiciary Committee investigation to get to the bottom of the case - if she couldn't do it herself.

The Trentadue case was catching national headlines and creating havoc for DOJ officials.

Members of Reno's staff knew if Jordan would change his mind and rule the death a suicide, then the mounting pressure for hearings on Capitol Hill and the flood of news coverage about the terrible situation would likely go away.

Responding to the mounting pressure, Dr. Jordan continued to complain bitterly about his treatment. He went to the Oklahoma Attorney General with his problems. Soon afterward a letter was sent to the civil division of the Justice Department.

On March 12, 1998, Assistant Attorney General Patrick Crawley attacked the Justice Department attacks on Jordan and his staff.

Crawley opens the letter commenting that he presumes the DOJ lawyer also represents the FBI and the BOP.

Next Crawley launches into a vigorous assault on the US Justice Department's handling of the Trentadue investigation.

In a sort of "Alice through the Looking Glass" set of circumstances, truth has been obfuscated by the agendas of various federal agencies (mostly your clients). Particularly in the initial, and most critical, stage of the investigation when your clients (BOP and FBI) muddled and meddled their way into the investigative operation. In the process, your clients prevented the medical examiner from conducting a thorough and complete investigation into the death, destroyed evidence, and otherwise harassed and harangued Dr. Jordan and his staff. The absurdity of this situation is that your clients outwardly represent law enforcement or least some arm of licit government.

Nevertheless, even though the chances of ever establishing what really happened in this case have essentially vanished, the medical examiner will still look at any evidence that may be for the coming in an attempt to uncover the real truth in the death of Kenneth Trentadue. Whether the truth of the matter is that Kenneth Trentadue severely beat and bruised himself, slashed his own throat, and ultimately hung himself, which may displease the Trentadue family, or that he was beaten and killed by others, which may displease you and your clients, matters not to the medical examiner. The only item of interest in the medical examiner's investigation is the truth about what happened. It is, in the end, the task of the medical examiner to establish the cause and manner of his death.

The real tragedy in this case appears to be the perversion of law through chicanery and the misuse of public trust under the guise of some aberrant form of federalism. In a succession of either illegal, negligent, or just plain stupid acts, your clients succeeded in derailing the medical examiner's investigation and, thereby, may have obstructed justice in this case. As more and more information is revealed in this case, primarily through the efforts of Jesse Trentadue, it appears that your clients, and perhaps others within the Department of Justice, have been abusing the powers of their respective offices. If this is true, all Americans should be very frightened of your clients and the DOJ. Undaunted, when you come into possession of the least little tidbit of misinformation you immediately conclude that my client, who has always acted honorably, has suddenly abandoned his principles to improperly torpedo your group.

Summarizing the government's alleged interference in the ME's work, the letter concludes: "The investigation into the death of Kenneth Trentadue remains open. If it appears that the medical examiner is not particularly fond of your clients and

is openly distrustful of them and the DOF, it is not any more curious than a similar posture taken towards other criminal defendants who appear to have some liability in a case under investigation and seek to intervene or otherwise control the medical examiners' investigation. I will remind you that, to date, any and all evidence of wrongdoing points only to your client or clients. This is true regardless of how Kenneth Trentadue was killed. On the primary distinguishing features of this investigation has been the power of possible suspects to interfere with the inquiry under color of law. Naturally we view any participation by suspects in an investigation with no small amount of alarm and distrust."

Clearly the medical examiner's office was holding firm at this time. At least when Jesse Trentadue read the letter copied to his law office he felt satisfied that he had at least one stalwart friend fighting with him for truth and justice in the matter of his brother's revolting and mysterious death.

Then, suddenly Oklahoma County District Attorney Bob Macy's office entered the picture.

Macy and his staff came to the case on the guise they would conduct an independent investigation into the death of Kenneth Trentadue at the Federal Transfer Center.

The Patrick Ryan, the U.S. attorney charged with prosecuting the OKBOMB case stepped encouraged Macy's intervention. The stated rationale was that everyone seemed to have lost confidence in the FBI's and BOP's handling of the matter.

In very little time after Macy's staff entered the case and began visiting with the medical examiner, Dr. Jordan suddenly changed Trentadue's cause of death from unknown to suicide.

Shocked by the sudden turnaround, Jesse Trentadue immediately began researching who was behind getting Jordan to change his findings to suicide. Trentadue was told the man was a former Oklahoma City police detective named Tom Bevel.

Retained by District Attorney Bob Macy and assisted by Richard Wintory, a prosecutor working in Macy's office, Tom Bevel was a very well known local crime scene reconstruction expert.

Trentadue explained Bevel's unusual relationship to the various parties involved in the wide-ranging investigations and a wrongful death civil suit, "The expert witness hired to help defend the government against my family's civil suit, Tom Bevel was also being paid by the government to help write the OIG's report of its official investigation into the circumstances of my brother's death.

"More incredible still, Bevel was being paid by the government at the same time he was part of the Macy/Wintory investigation!"

Thus, all the investigations were linked through one individual. A crime scene investigator brought in by Bob Macy.

Tom Bevel would not only be charged with investigating the FBI, but he also was working for the Justice Department's Inspector General charged with investigating the FBI and Department of Justice's handling of the case. Additionally Mr. Bevel was collecting money from the Department of Justice to help them defend themselves against the Trentadue's family's wrongful death civil suit.

Jesse Trentadue is bitter about what his family has experienced: "The sick thing about the entire situation was the epidemic of government corruption we dug up. Perjury, subornation of perjury, threats to witnesses, destruction of evidence, fabrication of evidence and a \_ \_ \_ \_ pile of other acts of obstruction of justice! The government obtained an order preventing me from reporting those crimes to either federal prosecutors or the Senate Judiciary Committee while at the same time it was trying to indict me and my attorneys with the perjured testimony of a secret FBI informant. Every investigation was a sham."

And there would be much more evidence Trentadue would discover in his quest for justice. Evidence that he feels reveals one of the most carefully contrived cover-ups involving the Department of Justice in modern history.