

Harris hinted at violence to come

Friends: Klebold a follower

April 21, 1999

LITTLETON, Colorado (CNN) -- Investigators searching for a motive for the shooting attack at a Columbine High School may have found potential evidence on the Internet.

A few hours before he and a friend allegedly turned their high school into a killing field, Eric Harris apparently left a message on the Internet stating that Tuesday would be the last day of his life.

This message was posted in an America Online chat room at 8:41 a.m. and read:

- Member name: Eric Harris
- Hobbies: today is my last day on earth
- Computers: be prepared

Three hours later, Harris, 17, and Dylan Klebold, 18, allegedly walked into Columbine High School and opened fire on their classmates and teachers with guns and explosive devices, then committed suicide.

Researchers at the Los Angeles-based Simon Wiesenthal Center said they downloaded an Internet file belonging to Harris in which he talked about how easy it was to make pipe bombs, saying, "Pipes are about as easy to purchase as a CD."

The file went into elaborate details on how to make the bombs and what kind of powder to use. And it marveled about how effective the bombs were, saying, "Pipe bombs are some of the easiest and deadliest ways to kill a group of people."

Harris apparently used the site to communicate with other members of his "Trenchcoat Mafia" gang.

He posted violent lyrics from a German techno-music group. He also posted a scribbled drawing with a Satan-like figure and features that seemed to portray violence.

AOL shut down the Web site late Tuesday night.

AOL spokeswoman Kim McCreery said she couldn't comment on whether this was, in fact, Harris' account but said any content considered relevant to the school shooting had been taken down and preserved for the FBI.

Suspect told one student: 'Get out'

Jefferson County District Attorney Dave Thomas said investigators planned to question associates of Harris.

"A lot of people have mentioned to us that there are more people in this, as we call it, 'the Trenchcoat Mafia,' and we need to talk to these people and find out what they know about this, how long this has been going on and what the plans were," Thomas said.

"And as you know, apparently there has been a Web site up for some time that discusses some of these things," he noted.

In the hours after the violence, one student who knew Harris told reporters that Harris had hinted that something was going to happen.

"In third hour today, we had a test. And he told me like, it didn't matter anymore," Brooks Brown said. "And I asked him, ... why he was acting strange. He said, 'Brooks, I like you, I like you now, go home, get out of here.' So I took off, because he's not one to be toyed with."

Just a year before, Brown had run afoul of Harris, who then threatened Brown's life on his Web site, Brown said.

"He's big on that, they're all big on that," Brown said. "They're all big on anti-God, Satanism. They're really just pure hate is the way the entire group is. I know all of them, I'm acquaintances of all of them -- I wouldn't say friends, but I don't reject them."

Brown's family is angry because they say police were warned a year ago that Harris was building pipe bombs in his basement and exploding them around town, threatening to use them on people.

One of Harris' next-door neighbors heard something unusual in the Harris garage last week. Bill Konen said police told him it was glass being used as shrapnel for pipe bombs.

"I heard one of them ask the other for a metal baseball bat," Konen said. "Didn't think anything of it, but shortly after, I heard the garage door open and I heard constant glass bashing."

Suspects favored 'death match' computer games

Harris and Klebold reportedly played computer games often, spending hours trying to kill each other with digital guns and explosive devices.

The two got their own home computers and linked them with modems.

"They had death matches with violent computer games, matching computer to computer," said Nick Baumgart, 17, a senior who met Klebold in grade school.

"I don't believe violent video games lead to violence, but this was different. They'd play these games for hours and hours and hours," Baumgart said.

Public opinion of alleged shooters

Both youths had two parents at home and came from families neighbors described as good people.

Authorities said school officials reported no discipline problems with the two suspects.

"They were extremely bright, but not good students," said choir teacher Lee Andres. "... They disliked authority. They did not like to be told what to do."

Both boys had criminal pasts. In February 1998, the two were arrested for breaking into a car. They were put into a county diversion program for nonviolent offenders.

Klebold was a follower, not a leader, who went astray after meeting up with Harris, friends said.

John House, 17, a senior, said he refused to associate with Klebold after he joined the "Trenchcoat Mafia."

"I went bowling with him, and when he would do something good, he would shout 'Heil Hitler' and throw up his hand," House said. "It just made everyone mad."

Harris' and Klebold's interest in Hitler and World War II was well-known around school, students said. They played war games and bragged about their guns.

The two sometimes spoke German in the hallways and made references to "4-20," Hitler's birthday, said Aaron Cohn, who lives five doors down from the tidy, two-story home on a quiet cul-de-sac where Harris' family moved in a couple years ago.

The massacre took place on the anniversary of Hitler's birthday.

But a friend of both suspects, Eric Veik, said the "Trenchcoat Mafia" was just a social group that "didn't bother anybody else and other people, most of the time, didn't bother them."

Veik said when he first heard they were responsible for Tuesday's violence, his first thought was: "'Eric and Dylan, why'd you do this?' Also something ran through saying, 'You guys finally did it. You did something.'

"And they did something that will never, I don't believe ever, leave the hearts and minds of the students of the school and the rest of the people around the world."