

Littleton Focus Is on Gunmen's Friends

By Lorraine Adams and Cheryl W. Thompson; Alice Crites, contributing
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Investigators probing the rampage at Columbine High School are focusing on the gunmen's circle of friends – searching two of their homes, unraveling a Web site's cryptic writings and questioning witnesses about possible accomplices.

No additional suspects have been charged, police say. But the investigation, now in its third week and involving dozens of local and federal agents, is proceeding under a theory that the two teenagers did not act alone in placing more than 50 bombs in and around the school, according to parents and students who have been questioned by law enforcement authorities.

Jefferson County sheriff's Deputy Troy Gardalen said authorities believe that some friends of Eric Harris, 18, and Dylan Klebold, 17, knew before April 20 that the two were planning the rampage. Authorities now believe the elaborate plan was underway for a year. They have found a hit list of targets and Web pages detailing earlier "missions" of vandalism against enemies.

So far, police have questioned at least 10 former and current members of the Trenchcoat Mafia, a loosely organized group of 30 to 40 self-proclaimed high school "outsiders" who often dressed in black clothing and military garb.

Authorities have questioned a friend of the gunmen, Chris Morris, 17, a Columbine senior and one of three students taken into custody at the crime scene on April 20 and later released. Morris's attorney, John M. Richilano, said Morris is a "material witness" and not a suspect and is cooperating with investigators.

Morris worked with Harris and Klebold at Blackjack Pizza and frequently was seen with them on Fridays at a nearby bank, where Morris has an account and the three often cashed their paychecks.

One key question for investigators is how Harris and Klebold got the money they used to buy weapons and explosives used in the crime. On a Web site last year, Harris described acts of vandalism and wrote of using paychecks to buy fuses and ammunition. At one point he added, "Plus we just got our paychecks. . . . They aren't big, . . . but they can cover quite a bit."

Police have asked questions about Morris's bank account and a withdrawal he made four days before the shooting, according to a source familiar with the investigation.

"Within the last week and within two months previous to that, he had between \$500 and \$900 in Chris's account and he had depleted it down to \$7 that day," said the source. Asked about the withdrawal, Richilano, Morris's attorney, said, "I am not going to comment on specific evidence."

Harris's Web page from a year ago – now considered an ominous warning of his growing rage – described the creation of four pipe bombs by "REB" and "VoDka" – nicknames for Harris and Klebold. It thanked three unidentified people – nicknamed "Jester," "Imaginos" and "Excaluber" – "for helping me make this page happen." Authorities are trying to determine whether friends knew of preparations to use the bombs.

The pipe bombs and fragments are being analyzed at a federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms laboratory in Walnut Creek, Calif., an ATF agent said yesterday. The analysis of fingerprints, gunpowder and other flammable material used in the crime will take several weeks.

The Trenchcoat Mafia was at its height in 1997 and 1998, students say, but Harris and Klebold became involved only recently. Joseph M. Stair Jr., a Columbine graduate and early group member, said they started "hanging out" in their senior year.

John Beachem, a 1997 Columbine graduate and former member, said he was questioned by police and turned over a list of members' names.

Most of the group's original members graduated last year. Morris is one of the few original members still at Columbine.

A 15-year-old friend of Morris told The Post that Morris was at the home of a Trenchcoat member, Cory Friesen, 20, and not at school at the time of the shooting because he had no classes after 10:30 a.m. Columbine school officials did not return calls.

As news of the shooting broke at 11:30 a.m., Morris's mother called her son to make sure he was okay, according to the friend. Morris, in turn, called 911 and reported that Klebold and Harris might be involved, sources said.

While the siege was unfolding inside the high school, police transported Morris from Friesen's home to Columbine. There, Morris was handcuffed in front of media cameras and placed in a police car, but not formally charged. Richilano said he did not know why his client was handcuffed.

On his Web site, Harris described targets, missions and the use of paychecks to pay for fuses and firecrackers. In one portion, it said that a group of Harris's friends, including Klebold, used firecrackers at one target's house and shot Klebold's "sawed off BBgun."

Investigators also are looking into students who were apparent targets of Harris and Klebold. One parent, who asked not to be identified, said the FBI questioned her because her son's car outside the school had been rigged with a bomb. He had been taunted by members of the Trenchcoat Mafia.

Another avenue of pursuit is a hit list compiled by Harris. According to two students interviewed by the FBI, the list contained the names of many athletes, as well as one slain student – Isaiah Shoels. Sam Riddle, the family's spokesman, said the Shoels home had been vandalized over the

last year and "clearly had been targeted." The family reported the incidents to police, who "told them it's just kids pulling pranks," Riddle said.

Judy and Randall Brown, the parents of Columbine student Brooks Brown, last year turned over to the Jefferson County Sheriff's Department Harris's Web page writings, in which he dubbed his group "more of a gang."

"We plan out and execute missions. Anyone pisses us off, we do a little deed to their house. Eggs, teepee, superglue, busyboxes, large amounts of fireworks, you name it," Harris wrote. "We have many enemies [sic] in our school, therefor we make many missions."

Among the many students in the library who have been questioned by investigators is John Savage, a senior. Most of the victims were killed or wounded in the library. In an interview, Savage said he trembled under a library table when Harris asked him, "Who's hiding under there?"

In trying to explore with investigators why he was spared, he said that this semester he had philosophy class with Harris and calculus with Klebold.

"I had been nice to them," Savage, who is shy and stutters, said in an interview. "I didn't do anything super nice – just 'Hi, how you doing, man?',"

Harris and Klebold were armed with two shotguns, a rifle, a TEC-DC9 handgun and nearly 60 pipe bombs and explosives when they launched the attack.

Since the shootings, police have questioned Robyn Anderson, 18, who bought three of the weapons in a legal transaction. Mark Manes, 22, turned himself in to authorities last week for the illegal TEC-DC9 sale.

"My client had no knowledge of what was going to happen," said his attorney, Robert Ransome.