



Deeb acquittal not likely to help Spence

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Muneer Mohammad Deeb's acquittal this week won't have any effect on others serving time for the Lake Waco murders, attorneys previously involved in the Deeb case said Thursday.

The convictions of three other men for carrying out the murders did not depend on finding Deeb guilty of concocting a murder plot, the attorneys said.

"This will not affect David Wayne Spence at all. He was convicted of two different murders in two different counties," said former McLennan County district attorney Vic Feazell. "In fact, the second conviction was totally independent of Deeb — I don't believe his name was even mentioned during the trial in Bryan."

Feazell, who now lives and practices law in Austin, prosecuted Deeb, David Wayne Spence, and brothers Tony and Gilbert Melendez in the Lake Waco murder cases.

Waco attorney Dick McCall, who represented Deeb for about nine years and who testified at his retrial, concurred.

"Spence was not tried for murder for hire — it was murder while committing rape or kidnapping. So it should not have any affect at all," McCall said. "They're independent and standing on their own."

Deeb was acquitted Tuesday night, after a four-week trial, of being the mastermind behind the Lake Waco triple murders.

He was convicted on murder-for-hire charges in a Cleburne courtroom in 1985 and spent six years on Death Row before his conviction was overturned.

The Court of Criminal Appeals ruled that inmate Darryl Beckham's testimony about what Spence told him about Deeb's involvement in the killing was inadmissible.

Prosecutors said Deeb offered Spence \$5,000 to kill Gayle Kelley Reyes so he could cash in an insurance policy he had taken out on her.

They said Spence mistook Jill Montgomery for Reyes when he and the Melendez brothers killed Montgomery, Kenneth Franks and Raylene Rice in Koehne Park on July 13, 1982.

The mutilated bodies of Franks, Rice and Montgomery were found later near Lake Waco.

Spence was convicted twice on capital murder charges — once in a Waco courtroom for the murder of Jill Montgomery and once in a Bryan courtroom for the murder of Kenneth Franks — and got two death sentences.

The U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear appeals of those convictions.

A Houston federal judge will set a hearing soon on a second round of appeals centered on Feazell's conduct during those trials.

Gilbert and Tony Melendez pleaded guilty and received life sentences for their roles in the slayings in return for their testimony.