

Ex-cellmate: Shay told ^{7/16/93} of bombing Recounts jailhouse talk

By RALPH RANALLI

A former cellmate of accused bombing suspect Thomas Shay Jr. testified yesterday Shay told him it was his alleged co-conspirator, Alfred Trenkler, who first suggested they build a bomb to blow up Shay's father.

Lawrence E. Plant, 37, of Quincy testified he was locked up with Shay in the Plymouth House of Correction in October 1992, one year after the bombing that killed Boston Police Officer Jeremiah Hurley.

Plant, who described himself as a recovering drug addict, was serving a 15-month sentence for uttering a false prescription.

Plant said that one night, Shay sat down beside his bed and initiated a conversation.

"He said 'I'm boom-boom. Don't you know me?' Plant testified. "And I said 'No, I don't.' And ... he went on about it, and he said, 'You have to know me, I'm the one that killed the Boston cop.' And in between he had said his name was Shay."

Plant also said Shay suggested he build a bomb to protect himself from other prisoners.

He also said, however, that Shay said he could buy an F-16 fighter jet or a tank from the U.S. military.

Plant said Shay described his conversation with Trenkler about the bomb.

"He said his friend had said, 'Well, I got a surprise for

you.' And after he said it, first he wouldn't tell him what the surprise was," Plant said.

"And after probing him some time, he told him the surprise was that he knew how to and he was building a bomb, and if you really did want to get even with his father that he would help him," Plant said.

"He said after a short period of time, they started building this bomb together. And ... they brought it over to his father's house. He put it up under the car, using magnets so it would stay up ... (and he said) that the way the bomb was supposed to have worked was that it was ignited by a radio frequency, equal to that of the car radio."

Plant also said Shay told him that he and Trenkler stole the explosives from a National Guard armory.

Under cross-examination by defense attorney Nancy Gertner, however, Plant admitted that he had cooperated previously with other police investigations.

He also said that at times, Shay appeared to be "ranting." A key part of Gertner's defense is that Shay made his self-incriminating statements due to a mental illness.

Federal prosecutors also began building their case against Trenkler. Prosecutors charge it was Trenkler, an electrical engineer, who had the expertise to build the bomb.