

# Probe of clinic shootings raises conspiracy idea

Associated Press

BOSTON — He drove more than 500 miles, bypassing 180 abortion clinics, before zeroing in on one of the few open on New Year's Eve — a clinic long the target of radical anti-abortion activists.

He was marginally employed and failed to pick up his last paycheck. Yet when he was arrested, police found over \$1,000 in cash.

He is described as a disturbed loner, an outsider to the anti-abortion movement. Yet police reportedly found a receipt from a Massachusetts anti-abortion group.

Although anti-abortion groups deny any connection to John Salvi III — who is charged with killing two women at two Massachusetts abortion clinics and shooting up a third clinic in Norfolk, Va. — the investigation has raised suspicions of a conspiracy.

"Why he went to Norfolk is a key aspect of the investigation," a senior federal official in Washington said on condition of anonymity.

"He not only found a clinic opened on New Year's Eve, but he found one with an anti-abortion demonstration going on attended by people who advocate violence against doctors," said Eleanor Smeal, president of the Feminist Majority Foundation. "It could be by chance, but it strains credibility."

Salvi was flown to Massachusetts yesterday after Virginia officials held off prosecuting him in the attack on Norfolk's Hillcrest Clinic. He faces two state murder charges in the Dec. 30 attack on two Brookline, Mass., abortion clinics that left two dead and five hurt.

In addition to the murder charges, a grand jury in Boston indicted him Wednesday on two federal firearms charges carrying up to



**John Salvi appeared in Norfolk (Va.) General District Court yesterday before being flown back to Massachusetts.**

10 years in prison each.

Yesterday, Salvi's attorney released a rambling six-page statement in which Salvi, 22, said he wants to be executed if he's convicted and wants to tell his story on television to Barbara Walters.

The Boston Globe reported yesterday that a police search of Salvi's Hampton, N.H., apartment turned up the name and number of Donald Spitz, director of Pro-Life Virginia, an anti-abortion group that has

tried to close the Norfolk clinic.

Spitz said yesterday he hadn't heard of Salvi before last week.

"There is no conspiracy," he said. "It's a fabrication of the pro-abortion mind, and the Justice Department is champing at the bit to do their bidding."

Spitz, a Baptist minister, had signed a petition endorsing the belief that the killing of abortion doctors is justifiable.

The petition was originally circu-

lated by Paul Hill, convicted last year of murdering an abortion doctor and his bodyguard in Pensacola, Fla. After those shootings, a federal task force was set up to investigate the possibility of a national conspiracy behind abortion clinic violence.

After years of dealing with violence against abortion clinics as localized, isolated incidents, those shootings were the major impetus behind the Justice Department's decision to embark on a full-scale campaign that treats such attacks as a nationwide phenomenon requiring coordination between federal, state and local law-enforcement agencies and the clinics themselves.

The new sense of urgency is underscored by literature U.S. marshals have prepared for abortion providers about security and what to do in the event of an attack or a threat of violence. Federal authorities are attempting to document ev-

ery threat and are urging providers to be cautious about their safety.

The marshals service bulletin also urges providers to be wary of suspicious packages, particularly those that appear to have oil stains or peculiar odors such as shoe polish or almonds.

Following last week's Brookline shootings, President Clinton directed all of the nation's U.S. attorneys to develop regional task forces involving state and local authorities to address the security and investigative needs of clinics in their areas.

And in recent weeks federal authorities have sought to use new civil penalties to protect abortion providers.

But despite all the activity under way, officials warn there remain serious limitations on federal resources, constitutional considerations and political sensitivity about the highly emotive issue.