

FBI reps to testify at Kenyan inquest

NAIROBI, Kenya – Three FBI representatives are expected to testify in early March at an inquest into the death of Mill Hill Father John Kaiser, a U.S. missionary who died in Kenya in August 2000.

Mbuthi Gathenji, a lawyer representing the Catholic Church and Father Kaiser's family, said Feb. 21 that the officials were expected to begin their testimony early March 5. He named the three as Tom Neer, a specialist in behavioral analysis; Dr. Vincent Di Maio, a forensics specialist; and Bill Corbett, who has worked in counterterrorism.

Father Kaiser, who often spoke out against abuses under the government of former Kenyan President Daniel Arap Moi, was found dead, with bullet wounds to his head, along a highway southwest of Nairobi.

The first police officers on the scene thought he had been murdered, but in 2001 the FBI ruled his death a suicide, and the Kenyan government agreed.

The Kenyan bishops' conference almost immediately dismissed the FBI results and questioned why it considered the information of only the government pathologist, not the three additional doctors it had sent to the scene to collect evidence. They said that, based on ballistics reports, suicide was a physical impossibility.

The bishops said that if Father Kaiser committed suicide he "involved himself in rather difficult contortions while in the process."

They said that, although a doctor's report said Father Kaiser had bloody finger marks inside his pants pockets, the FBI failed to explain how he got his hands into the pockets after allegedly blowing off his head. They also said no reasons were given as to why photographs taken from the crime scene were blurred, and no explanation was given as to why fingerprints were found on the priest's vehicle but not on the gun.

After 24 years in office, President Moi lost the presidential election in December

2002, and several months later the Kenyan government ordered the inquest.

Father Kaiser, a 67-year-old priest and native of Perham, Minn., had worked in Kenya for 36 years. His advocacy for human rights led to his expulsion from the country in 1999, but the government revoked its decision after an outcry in the Kenyan media and appeals from the country's bishops.

Father Kaiser had drawn the ire of some members of President Moi's government after testifying against two Cabinet ministers in an inquiry on tribal clashes. Newspaper reports from Nairobi said documents linking the Cabinet ministers to the clashes were found with Father Kaiser.

In a book, "If I Die," about his missionary work, Father Kaiser wrote: "I want all to know that if I disappear from the scene, because the bush is vast and hyenas many, that I am not planning any accident, nor, God forbid, any self destruction. Instead, I trust in a good guardian angel and in the action of grace."