

Liberty dollar head anticipates his arrest

By Gavin Lesnick
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The head of an Evansville-based private currency company raided this week by federal investigators says he expects to be arrested in the near future.

Federal agents confiscated a variety of documents and precious metals Wednesday morning from Liberty Services, which produces "inflation-proof" silver liberty dollars and other alternative currencies. The company's national headquarters is located in a strip mall at 225 N. Stockwell Road.

Bernard von NotHaus, the group's monetary architect, said Friday that the search was clearly a part of a large-scale investigation and that seizure documents filed in the case suggest he will soon be indicted on money laundering, wire fraud and mail fraud charges.

But von NotHaus said those charges are baseless and that he looks forward to defending himself, and the liberty dollar, in court.

"I see this as a golden opportunity to go into court and vindicate the liberty dollar as being legal and being the solution to our great country's monetary problems," von NotHaus said. "This is going to be a big trial. We're going to be putting Evansville on the map. Because money is going to be on trial right there in Evansville."

The legitimacy of the alternative silver currency has been the subject of an ongoing dispute between von NotHaus and the U.S. Mint, which in September 2006 issued a public warning that circulating it violated federal law.

A continuing federal suit von NotHaus filed in response in Evansville this year seeks an injunction against the federal government to force it to stop referring to the liberty dollar as illegal currency.

But despite that contentious history with the U.S. Mint, von NotHaus said word of the raid came as a complete surprise. He does not live in Evansville and said he was about to enter a meeting in Miami on Wednesday when an employee called to let him know the office "had some visitors."



Bernard von NotHaus The monetary architect of the liberty dollar

"It was totally out of the blue," von NotHaus said. "How would I expect something like this? The Federal Reserve, the Secret Service itself and numerous different people within the government said what we were doing was legal ... I guess they didn't like our lawsuit."

Officials seized more than a million dollars worth of metal in the Evansville raid, von NotHaus estimated, including nearly two tons of coins featuring an image of Texas Congressman and GOP presidential candidate Ron Paul. About 500 pounds of silver and 40 to 50 ounces of gold were also taken, as was paper currency and other metals, he said.

Investigators also raided a private mint in Idaho and seized millions more in metals there, von NotHaus said.

Von NotHaus said he spoke by phone with one of the federal agents, who told him the investigation was related to the U.S. Mint warning. The agent told him they wanted to meet soon to talk, he said.

"I'm sure he wants to arrest me," he said. "If not now, then pretty soon ... But I'm not hiding out. They don't have to bomb me. All they have to do is call me and I'll surrender."

Criminal case documents had not yet been filed in U.S. District Court in Evansville on Friday morning, and there was no immediate confirmation from federal authorities on whether an indictment of van NotHaus will be sought.