

NATIONAL

NEWS FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY

Tobacco insider answers questions

■ **INVESTIGATION:** Jeffrey Wigand talks to attorneys despite company protest

PASCAGOULA, Miss. (AP) — A tobacco industry whistleblower who is said to have "devastating" inside information fielded questions Wednesday from lawyers for the U.S. Justice Department and the state, despite his former employer's effort to silence him.

Government sources in Washington, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Jeffrey Wigand met in private for several hours with lawyers from the Justice Department's antitrust division for an investigation into whether tobacco companies conspired to suppress development of safer, self-extinguishing cigarettes.

Wigand, who was fired in

1993 as vice president of research at Brown & Williamson Tobacco Corp., also submitted to questioning by the Mississippi attorney general's office. The office is suing 13 tobacco companies for reimbursement of millions of taxpayer dollars spent treating poor people with smoking-related illnesses. It wasn't immediately known whether federal prosecutors were also asking questions.

"Jeffrey Wigand's testimony will be very devastating to the tobacco industry," Mississippi Attorney General Mike Moore said before the questioning began. "This is a man who had been on the inside for four years, a man who knows where all the bodies are buried, and we just want to see if we can find some of those bodies."

Brown & Williamson, based in

Louisville, Ky., sued Wigand last week, saying he violated an agreement binding him not to divulge "competitively sensitive" information when he talked to *60 Minutes*. CBS killed the interview before it was broadcast, citing legal concerns.

Later, Brown & Williamson got a restraining order from a Kentucky judge to stop Wigand from divulging inside information. Wigand's lawyers in Kentucky failed Wednesday to get that state's Court of Appeals to lift the restraining order.

Brown & Williamson said Wednesday it asked the Jefferson County, Ky., Circuit Court to hold Wigand in contempt. The court ordered Wigand to appear in person on Jan. 26 for a hearing on the matter, Brown & Williamson said.

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