

**SFGATE**<http://www.sfgate.com/news/article/Oklahoma-Bombing-Suspect-Lived-In-Land-of-3035491.php>

## Oklahoma Bombing Suspect Lived In Land of Desperados

Rob Haeseler, Bill Wallace, Chronicle Staff Writers Published 4:00 am, Tuesday, April 25, 1995

**1995-04-25 04:00:00 PDT Kingman, Arizona** -- Along the sun-baked stretch of Highway 93 that winds through the high desert between Phoenix and Kingman, the rows of dusty cactus plants and Yucca trees that line the pavement are riddled with bullet holes.

More than anything else, the pock-marked foliage is a testament to the durability of the Wild West spirit -- and to the almost religious devotion among many residents to what they see as their constitutional right to keep and bear arms.

Experts who monitor extremist groups say Arizona offers a salubrious climate for those who hold such beliefs.

"Arizona is the state that initially refused to recognize **Martin Luther King** day as a holiday," said **Mary Ann Mauney** of the **American Jewish Committee**, a **New York organization** that tracks anti- Semitic activity and hate groups.

"They had volunteer border patrols back in the early '80s trying to prevent immigrants from coming in. Two people tried to organize a Klan group there in the last year, although the effort sort of fizzled out. And **Aryan Nations** (a white supremacist organization headquartered in Hayden Lake, Idaho) has tried to organize a group there in recent years."

It was in this part of the country that **Timothy McVeigh**, the only man charged so far in last week's devastating Oklahoma City bomb blast, spent much of the last year.

Last weekend, a swarm of federal agents interviewed McVeigh's former associates and co-workers, seeking evidence in the Oklahoma City bombing case. Some contacted by the agents described McVeigh as an abrasive loner with a quick temper and a fondness for guns.

Federal investigators refused to discuss the case or disclose exactly what they were

seeking here.

"We have been advised by headquarters since last Wednesday that all statements are to come out of Washington," said FBI special agent **Jack Callahan**, a spokesman for the FBI in Phoenix.

However, local residents said investigators whipped through like a desert dust devil.

"There was a lot of activity," said **Ruth Biber**, an employee of Budget Rental Car at the **Kingman Airport**. "Three of them (agents) even parachuted in here and were met by sheriff's deputies."

Investigators took soil samples from a field outside the city, looking for residues from a homemade bomb that was detonated there two months ago. They also contacted the operator of The Mail Room, a rental post box service where McVeigh received mail, asking detailed questions about what he had received and who from.

"I had to describe each and every item by detail," said **Lynda Willoughby**, the proprietor of The Mail Room. "They came back in Sunday with court orders. I gave them everything."

Although McVeigh's anti-government views may not have seemed unusual to many Kingman residents, some said his intimidating demeanor and strange behavior set him apart.

One of them, **Jeff Arrowood**, recounted accompanying McVeigh to a frightening target practice session.

"Quite frankly, it scared the hell out of me," Arrowood said. "After the course was over, he pretty much went crazy emptying on anything: trees, rocks, anything there. He just went ballistic."

**Kasey Burton**, a former neighbor, said she once saw McVeigh stride into a field near the trailers and shoot at an unknown target with a semiautomatic weapon.

Another neighbor, **Marilyn Hart**, said McVeigh prowled nearby canyons and mesas, blazing away with various weapons.

"He just plain didn't care," Hart said. "Didn't matter the time of day or night, he'd be out there shooting."

By all accounts, McVeigh picked a place where he could feel at home: Distrust of the government runs deep here, and people's love of firearms is almost as great as their fear that the government will try to take them away.

**James Jarrett**, an adjunct professor of justice studies at Arizona State **University** in Phoenix, said the spirit of the Old West still prevails in much of Arizona, and the state attracts people who see themselves as spiritual ancestors of frontiersmen. Among those drawn by the area's tradition are people who share the apocalyptic views of the extreme right wing.

"People like that tend to congregate in small rural Western areas," said Jarrett, who infiltrated right-wing organizations as a law enforcement officer before becoming a scholar. "They see themselves as being in the mold of the pioneers. . .

"They want to be like **Daniel Boone** and pack up and move on when they can see the smoke from a neighbor's chimney. They have simply not come to be part of the 20th century."

Since the late 1970s, Arizona has served as a mecca for paramilitary groups with a grudge against the government. In the 1980s, the state was home to a collection of right-wing activists known to law enforcement agencies as the **Arizona Patriots**. Members were convicted of conspiracy and weapons charges in 1986 after a federal investigation.

More recently, it has been the focus of organizing by members of the fast-growing citizens' militia movement. A national list of militia organizations lists a Kingman mail drop as a contact point for an Arizona branch of the group.

Although experts on the far right say many militia supporters are law-abiding citizens who are simply concerned with federal policies and gun control laws, some have ties to established white supremacist organizations such as the Aryan Nations Church in Hayden Lake, Idaho.

Others have shown an obsession with the bloody siege of Mount **Carmel**, the **Branch**

**Davidian** compound in Waco, Texas -- seeing in that confrontation proof that the government will stop at nothing to take guns away from the citizenry.

**David Espy**, a leader in one of the state's three militia organizations, has suggested that the actions of the federal government constitute a "clear and present danger" to civil rights.

In an October 1994 report on the militia movement by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, Espy says that American patriots are on a collision course with their own government:

"There is still a large group of us out here that have inherited revolutionary DNA and are willing to fight for it until our dying breath."

© 2016 Hearst Communications, Inc.

**H E A R S T**