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McVeigh may have had larger plan

Officials say account found in his car details simultaneous bombings

Journal Sentinel wire services

Oklahoma City — Federal investigators may have located a diary in which Timothy McVeigh and associates outlined plans for simultaneous bombings in Phoenix, Ariz.; Omaha, Neb.; and Oklahoma City, sources have told the Fort Worth Star-Telegram.

The suspects concentrated only on the last site when they ran out of time to acquire enough explosives for all three, the report said.

Two high-ranking federal officials said they were told that the so-called McVeigh diary details the bombing strategy and indicates that the buildings had been "cased," suggesting that the bombers knew that a day-care center was in the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building.

The FBI and Justice Department said Thursday that they had no knowledge of such a "diary," but they would not comment on whether they had information about other planned bombings.

After the FBI and Justice Department denied the report, one of the Star-Telegram's sources said "maybe it wasn't a diary;

maybe it was a letter." The source reiterated Thursday night that agents had confiscated "something in writing" that outlined McVeigh's intentions for bombings in the three cities.

Cable News Network, citing unnamed sources, reported a similar story Thursday night. The network said FBI agents had obtained a letter written by McVeigh to a girlfriend revealing plans for bombings in other cities. The letter was found in the 1973 Mercury Marquis that McVeigh was driving when he was stopped 90 minutes after the bombing for not having a license plate on the vehicle, CNN said.

The diary/letter story unfolded the same day that federal magistrate Ron Howland ordered that McVeigh stand trial and be held without bail. Howland also ordered lawyers for McVeigh to continue to defend him despite their arguments that they lost friends in the blast. Howland turned down a request at the preliminary hearing to move McVeigh's trial out of Oklahoma City. The hearing was held at the El Reno federal prison 30 miles west of Oklahoma City.

McVeigh is the only suspect charged in the bombing, but the FBI is searching for a second man depicted in a sketch as square-jawed, tattooed and identified only as John Doe 2.

In other developments at the hearing:

■ Pieces of detonator cord were found on McVeigh's clothing when he was arrested, said federal prosecutor Merrick Garland.

■ FBI agent John Hersley testified that McVeigh's clothing tested positive for explosive residue. Three witnesses thought they saw McVeigh outside the building before the bombing, but were not able to conclusively pick him out of a lineup.

■ Hersley also testified that agents found the license plate from the Ryder truck used in the bombing, still attached to its bumper, largely intact but badly burned.

■ The FBI asked for help in finding an Arizona license plate that may have fallen off McVeigh's getaway car. They said Arizona license plate number LZC646 may have fallen off McVeigh's car near the blast scene, Kennedy said. Arizona records obtained by The Associated Press show that plate belongs to a 1983 Pontiac station wagon that McVeigh registered in February. McVeigh was driving a yellow 1977 Mercury Marquis when he was stopped.

Discovering where the license plate fell may offer critical clues about the movements of McVeigh and any accomplices that morning, investigators said.