

McVeigh ordered to stand trial

FBI issues alert on license plate

By Doug Ferguson
Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — Timothy McVeigh, incriminated by "an indelible trail of evidence," was ordered Thursday to stand trial in the Oklahoma bombing, while authorities put out an alert for his missing Arizona license plate in hopes it will lead them to the second suspect. Their fear: John Doe No. 2 may bomb again.

Federal magistrate Ronald Howland also

ordered McVeigh held without bail.

The decision came after four hours of testimony from special agent John Hersley in which he described accounts of several witnesses, including one man who saw McVeigh's yellow Mercury speeding away from a parking lot near the building with McVeigh and a second passenger.

Hersley said at the hearing his "primary responsibility is to find the other subject to prevent another bomb from going off."

Death toll now more than 100

The death toll in the nation's largest terror attack, meanwhile, passed a grim milestone: More than 100 bodies have now been found in the rubble of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building.

Another witness, a meter maid, told the FBI she saw the defendant driving a Ryder truck headed toward her in the direction of the building shortly before the blast. The truck was moving slowly enough that she thought the driver was going to stop and ask directions.

She described only one occupant in the truck, but other witnesses said there were two.

Other witnesses claim to have seen McVeigh in the area a few days before the bombing. One, who claimed to have seen McVeigh on April 13, 17 and 18, made a positive ID of him in a lineup Saturday.

In his ruling, Rowland said: "The court finds an indelible trail of evidence that starts in Junction City and ends up at the front door of the Murrah building." Junction City, Kan., is where McVeigh rented the truck that authori-

ties believe carried the bomb to Oklahoma City.

McVeigh followed the proceedings intently, showing little emotion but chuckling a few times during light-hearted moments. He seemed most interested when one of his attorneys showed the court a large collection of newspaper headlines about the case.

'He was staring at me'

The Saturday lineup was held for four witnesses. One positively identified McVeigh, one picked out two people including McVeigh, a third could not ID anyone and a fourth person initially said he did not recognize him but later said, "Yes, that was him, I hesitated because he was staring at me," Hersley said.

An indictment must be filed within 30 days of

HEARING continued on 1A

TimesDaily/Friday, April 28, 1995

3A

HEARING continued from 1A

McVeigh's first court appearance last Friday night. No further hearings were immediately scheduled.

Susan Otto, one of McVeigh's defense lawyers, disputed whether the witness accounts proved McVeigh was responsible for the bombing.

"None of these witnesses have said they saw Mr. McVeigh detonate the bomb. That's all there is to it," Otto said.

His other lawyer, John Coyle, tried to point out that some witness accounts placing McVeigh in Oklahoma City at various times before the bombing contradicted other witnesses who placed him elsewhere, including Junction City.

"I thought Mr. McVeigh was at the Dreamland Motel when these witnesses placed him in downtown Oklahoma City," Coyle said.

Attorneys have tried to withdraw

Both Otto and Coyle have sought to withdraw from the case. The judge ordered them for now to continue on it, and also denied a bid for a change of venue.

Otto bolstered her plea to be let out of the case by reading a list of 10 people she knew who were killed in the blast and an 11th who was still missing. Coyle has also said he knew someone killed in the blast.

"We heard it, we smelled it. We lived through it," Otto said.

The death toll rose to 110 with the discovery of 11 more bodies, eight of them in "the pit" of the pancaked floors above the day-care center and Social Security offices. All were adults.

"We've gone through most of the day care (area) at this point," said Fire Chief Gary Marrs. "The Social Security (area) is going to be harder to determine. I think we've hit spots of both areas."

"It seems to be going faster the lower we go," Marrs said. He said searchers had reduced the rubble pile at the front of the pit from three stories high to about the height of one story.

Fifteen of the dead identified so far have been children, said Ray Blakeney, spokesman for the state medical examiner's office. Ninety people were believed missing, including four children from the day-care center and a fifth who was in the

Social Security office.

Lt. Joe Beale of the Dade County, Fla., fire rescue squad said he has stopped giving his partner, Brandee, the command to sniff out live people.

When McVeigh, the only person yet charged in the bombing, was stopped by a state trooper on April 19, 90 minutes after the blast, his yellow Mercury Marquis was missing a license plate. That plate has not been found, and the FBI is seeking it, said special agent Weldon Kennedy, who is in charge of the investigation.

A Washington law enforcement source, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said investigators know "that plate was on a vehicle in Oklahoma City before the blast." There is a videotape that shows the plate on a vehicle in Oklahoma City, the official said; it has been reported previously that a videotape shows the Ryder truck outside the federal building.

No reliable sightings of Doe No. 2

Why would it be useful now?

"It might be on the ground," and the location might help pinpoint an escape route, the official said.

"Or it might be on another vehicle," the official said, suggesting that it might have been switched to an escape vehicle used by Doe No. 2.

The source said there has been no reliable sighting of Doe No.2 since the explosion.

Arizona records obtained by The Associated Press show the plate belongs to a 1983 Pontiac station wagon that McVeigh registered in Kingman in February, giving his address as a mail drop there.

McVeigh was driving the 1977 Mercury when he was stopped. But The Daily Oklahoman reported Monday that McVeigh traded a 1980s-model Pontiac and \$250 cash for the Mercury in Junction City, Kan., five days before the bombing. He put the Arizona plate from the Pontiac onto the Mercury, the newspaper reported.

Records from the Michigan secretary of state's office show that James Douglas Nichols — the Michigan farmer named as a material witness in

the bombing along with his brother, Terry — sold the Pontiac to McVeigh for \$100.

The brothers were taken into custody last week as witnesses. Both later were charged in Michigan with conspiring with McVeigh to manufacture explosives — charges not directly related to the Oklahoma bombing.

Terry Nichols is an Army buddy of McVeigh's, and McVeigh listed James Nichols as his next of kin when he was arrested, authorities have said.

During a trip from Oklahoma City to Kansas three days before the bombing, McVeigh warned Terry Nichols that "something big is going to happen," a prosecutor disclosed at a hearing Wednesday.

In their efforts to track McVeigh's movements, authorities for days have been canvassing restaurants, motels and other businesses along Interstate 35, which leads to Junction City. It was there that the Ryder truck believed to have carried the 4,800-pound bomb was rented.

In other developments:

■ Lynda Willoughby, manager of The Mailroom, the Kingman mail drop used by McVeigh, said she recognized the sketch of John Doe No. 2 as a man who picked up McVeigh's mail in March.

Willoughby said she also was questioned about another man, Mike Fortier, who sometimes picked up McVeigh's mail. Fortier lived for a time near Fort Riley, where McVeigh served in the army.

■ The Hastings Tribune of Nebraska reported that James Nichols may have spent the night of the bombing in a motel in Superior, Neb.

It said the manager reported to the sheriff's department that a man named James Nichols was registered at the motel April 19.

■ The business whose crumpled card was found in an Oklahoma police cruiser after McVeigh's arrest was identified by a Wisconsin sheriff as Paulsen Military Supply in Antigo, Wis. Sheriff Dave Steger of Langlade County said the FBI had interviewed the store's owners, who denied knowing McVeigh. The store's co-owner, Ed Paulsen, refused to comment.