

Court orders McVeigh to stand trial

Cites 'indelible trail' of evidence at hearing

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — Timothy McVeigh, incriminated by "an indelible trail of evidence," was ordered yesterday 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 Mr. 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 Mr. McVeigh's yellow car speeding away from a parking lot near the building with Mr. McVeigh and a passenger.

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

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 Murrah Federal Building.

Another witness, a meter maid, told the FBI she saw the defendant driving a rental 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 Mr. McVeigh in the area a few days before the bombing. One, who claimed to have seen Mr. McVeigh on April 13, 17, and 18, made a positive ID of him in a lineup Saturday.

In his ruling, Magistrate 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 Mr. McVeigh rented the truck that authorities believe carried the bomb to Oklahoma City.

Mr. 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.

The Saturday lineup was held for four witnesses. One positively identified Mr. McVeigh, one picked out two people including Mr. 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," Mr. Hersley said.

An indictment must be filed within 30 days of Mr. McVeigh's first court appearance April 21. No further hearings were scheduled immediately.

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

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bombing.

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

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

Both Ms. Otto and Mr. 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.

Ms. 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. Mr. Coyle has also said he knew someone killed in the blast.

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

The death toll rose to 110 with the discovery of 11 more bodies, 8 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.

When Mr. McVeigh, the only person yet charged in the bombing, was stopped by a state trooper April 19, 90 minutes after the blast, his yellow car 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 rental truck outside the federal building.

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.