

Bond Denied for Man Linked to McVeigh

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A fugitive gun enthusiast was ordered held without bond yesterday on charges stemming from an old federal firearms case and from a scuffle with agents who tracked him to a tiny desert town.

The hearing didn't touch on any connection to the Oklahoma City bombing. The New York Times is reporting that a preliminary inquiry has led authorities to conclude Steven Garrett Colbern probably had no role in the attack.

Colbern told investigators he knew Timothy McVeigh, one of two bombing suspects charged so far, under the alias of Tim Tuttle, the Times said, quoting unidentified sources.

Unidentified federal agents were quoted as saying that a search of Colbern's trailer and a nearby shed in the old mining town of Oatman turned up an illegal methamphetamine laboratory, firearms and ``some interesting paperwork."

Colbern, 35, spoke only briefly in a short hearing before a federal magistrate, softly answering ``yes" when asked if he understood the charges against him: failing to appear in the 1994 California firearms case, resisting arrest and being a fugitive in possession of a firearm. He was not required to enter a plea.

The latter charges stem from a scuffle when marshals stopped Colbern in the northwestern Arizona tourist town of Oatman.

The defendant, clad in tan prison garb and blue tennis shoes, was bruised and scratched on both arms.

U.S. Magistrate Barry Silverman ordered Colbern held pending a detention hearing Tuesday to consider bond.

Janet Napolitano, the U.S. attorney for Arizona, said she opposes bond because Colbern is a flight risk.

Napolitano refused to comment on any possible connection to the April 19 bombing, which killed 168 people in the nation's worst domestic terrorist attack.

``The only charges relate to the California warrant and the circumstances surrounding his arrest in Arizona," she said.

John R. Hannah, named with fellow public defender John M. Sands to represent Colbern, declined to speculate about any connection.

A senior federal official in Washington, speaking to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity, said Friday that investigators were looking into a possible link between Colbern and McVeigh.

Another possible connection emerged yesterday when Mohave County authorities revealed that a roommate of Colbern's was being held in connection with a mysterious explosion that damaged a house outside Kingman on Feb. 21.

The bomb was made of ammonium nitrate and fuel oil, as was the Oklahoma City bomb, and sources in Washington have told The AP that the explosion was being checked as a possible practice bomb.

Sheriff's deputies ordered reporters to stay 150 feet from the trailer home when they arrested Dennis Kemp Malzac, 37, on Friday night, saying it was a precaution against a possible explosion.

StarNet: The Oklahoma City bombing and fears about the government remain an active topic on a "news:misc.activism.militia" newsgroup devoted to militia issues. And the "<http://www.kaiwan.com/~patriot/>" Patriot's WWW Page has a variety of militia contacts.