

Probe nets 2nd man in Oatman

Reportedly admits Kingman-blast tie

By Mark Shaffer
The Arizona Republic

OATMAN — The probe into the bombing of the Oklahoma City Federal Building added another Arizona connection Saturday with the arrest of an Oatman man over a February bombing south of Kingman.

Dennis Kemp Malzac, 37, was charged with one count of arson of an occupied structure in connection with the explosion, which some federal authorities have speculated was a practice run for Oklahoma City bombing suspect Timothy McVeigh.

Malzac's roommate, 35-year-old Steven Colbern, was arrested Friday in Oatman by federal authorities on

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an unrelated weapons charge. Colbern's ties to McVeigh and a brown pickup near the site of McVeigh's arrest in Perry, Okla., also are being examined.

Malzac was being held in lieu of \$50,000 bail after an initial appearance before Kingman Judge pro tem Stanley LaBossier on Saturday.

According to court records, Malzac, who refused to be interviewed, admitted his role in the Kingman-area bombing and told investigating officers that he is "fearful of others who are involved in this incident."

Malzac, who listed his occupation as miner, said that he had lived at the Oatman trailer of Preston Haney for 2 1/2 months. Haney said Colbern had

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lived with him for four months.

"I've got to be more selective in my roommates," Haney said.

The Feb. 21 bombing, which blew out five windows of the home of former Kingman resident Francis McPeak, a one-time business partner of McVeigh, has been the focus of much speculation since McVeigh's ties to the Kingman area were established after the Oklahoma City bombing.

Ammonium nitrate, a common fertilizer, was believed to be used in both bombings, and the Kingman bombing occurred just off Route 66 less than a quarter mile from a trailer that McVeigh had rented in 1993.

Federal officers concluded a four-hour search of Colbern's room and two nearby sheds on Haney's property early Saturday.

They found five rifles and shotguns, four cases of ammunition and several smaller ammunition cans, and chemicals and beakers consistent with methamphetamine production, said Lt. Rick Armstrong of the Oatman Fire Department.

"Some of it was machine-gun ammunition, and it appeared to have a Chinese manufacturer," Armstrong said. "The other things you would associate with producing meth, but there also were some chemicals missing."

Meanwhile, in Phoenix, Colbern made his initial appearance Saturday afternoon in front of federal Magistrate Barry Silverman.

He is charged with resisting arrest, possession of unregistered guns and failure to appear for trial on an firearms charge in California.

He was ordered held without bail until a detention hearing scheduled for Tuesday afternoon.

Dressed in tan jail pants, a tan shirt over his white T-shirt and blue jail shoes, Colbern was barely audible, answering "yeah" and "no" to the judge's questions. He was not handcuffed or shackled for the appearance.

Assistant federal public defenders Jon Sands and John Hannah were appointed to represent Colbern.

"The proceeding this morning was a routine administrative proceeding," said Janet Napolitano, U.S. attorney for Arizona. "It is normal in a fugitive situation where someone has already been a fugitive to request detention."

Colbern, 35, is being held at a federal corrections facility north of Phoenix.

Authorities said Colbern owns the

brown pickup that was caught on an Oklahoma trooper's video camera when McVeigh, the prime suspect in the April 19 bombing, was stopped on a traffic violation 90 minutes after the blast.

Napolitano, who appeared in court with Assistant U.S. Attorney Tom Hannis, refused to answer questions about whether the FBI was investigating a link between Colbern and the bombing in Oklahoma City, which killed 168 people in the nation's worst domestic terrorist attack.

In Oatman, Catherine Mauro, owner of Oatman Mining Co. Food & Spirits, where Colbern worked as a cook and dishwasher, said she was shocked by his arrest.

Mauro spent much of Saturday afternoon talking to other Oatman residents about Colbern while leaning on a rail in front of her business.

"He was supposed to have been at work Friday night," Mauro said. "I think everything is going to be cool for him. I don't think anyone in Oatman thinks that he has anything to do with the (Oklahoma) bombing."

Haney said that Colbern had been at his home during the bombing and that the two had watched televised reports of the disaster together.

But Mauro said that Colbern had not worked at the restaurant for a two-week period before and after the bombing.

"I was under the impression that he had gone to California, because he said that he had a family emergency to tend to," Mauro said. "But some of my friends said they saw him here during that time, so I guess that isn't a problem."

Mauro described Colbern as a meticulous dishwasher who had a strong interest in UFOs.

But now, Mauro said, she will remember Colbern primarily for the bombing and another image it has given this Old West town of 150 residents, along with burros, bars and bikers.

She looked up the street to a mock 1800s gunfight before a large crowd of tourists near Fast Fanny's Place and the Classy Coyote.

"This thing is kind of like 'oh, well.' It's not nearly as big around town as when the bikers come," Mauro said. "Every person here has something in their background. We don't pry or ask about it."

Contributing to this article was Judi Villa of *The Arizona Republic*.