

NATION

Friend: Colbern was 'Mr. Anti-government'

**By Tony Perry
and James Rainey**
Los Angeles Times

PHOENIX, Ariz. — As federal authorities investigate possible ties to the Oklahoma City bombing, Steven Garrett Colbern's father, Robert, said Saturday that he does not believe his son was involved.

"It would be out of character for him to be involved ... unless he's doing things I don't know about," the senior Colbern said.

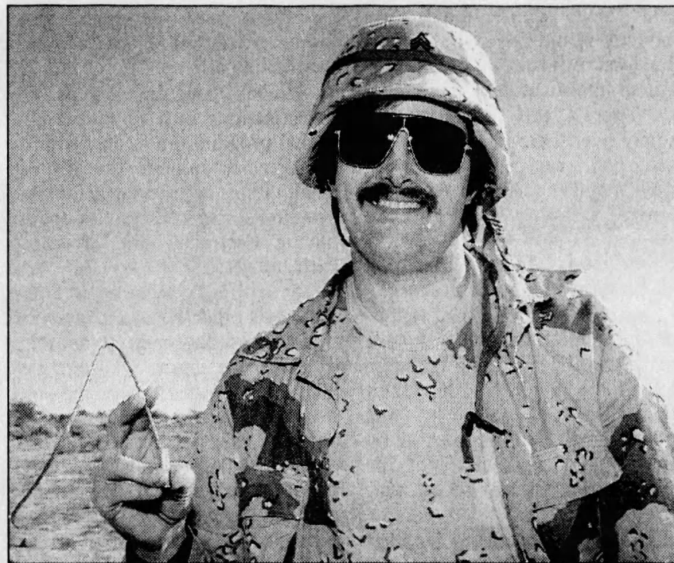
Colbern was arrested Friday as part of a nationwide hunt for suspects in the nation's worst terrorist attack.

Robert Colbern said his son had not been involved in any other serious trouble with the law before being arrested in July in Upland, Calif., on suspicion of carrying illegal weapons. Police at that time confiscated a 9mm handgun, a .22-caliber handgun, an assault-style rifle and a silencer from Colbern's car.

Others who have known Colbern, however, paint a picture of a man who seemed alienated from society. Though highly intelligent, perhaps even brilliant, Colbern suffered a series of personal failures in recent years, including lawsuits against him stemming from soured real-estate deals, bankruptcy and divorce. He was fascinated with firearms, explosives and reptiles, especially snakes.

Even while attending the University of California at Los Angeles in the 1980s, Colbern liked to wear combat fatigues and seemed to bear a deep hatred of government, women and non-whites, said a former roommate who asked not to be named.

"He was Mr. Anti-government and he would go into long tirades about the Jews, Mexicans



The Associated Press

Steven Colbern holds a blasting cap in the Mojave Desert in this 1993 photo. Authorities are investigating a link between Colbern and bombing suspect Timothy McVeigh.

and blacks, too," said the former roommate. "Every ethnic group was inferior to whites."

Colbern talked of a worldwide "Jewish conspiracy" to consolidate wealth and political power, and he liked to boast of making weekend forays into the desert to fire automatic weapons, including machine guns, the roommate said.

"He was hugely anti-Semitic

and we would have long arguments with him," he said of Colbern, adding: "He would make the same points over and over. He was somebody who was obviously intelligent but he had this hatred and you really couldn't figure out where it came from."

This past March, the contents of a storage locker Colbern rented went up for public auction because he fell delinquent on the

\$67-a-month payments. Ralph Schwab of Fort Mohave, Ariz., bought the items in storage based on a glimpse at a number of aquariums inside.

In an interview, Schwab remembered being surprised to find boxes crammed with chemistry books, bomb manuals, volumes about military history, German-made gas masks — and naked pictures of Colbern posing with snakes and guns, he said.

"There were all these books on explosives," said Schwab. "I mean, this guy was very learned, his background in college was big-time.

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