

## Officials Seek Witnesses Tied to McVeigh - Latest Target Refuses to Answer Questions

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WASHINGTON - Federal agents continue investigating anyone who might have crossed paths with Oklahoma City bombing suspect Timothy McVeigh, hoping for insight into the conspiracy behind the nation's worst terrorist attack.

The latest target on their list is Steven Garrett Colbern, a chemist-turned-firearms-fugitive who first told agents he knew Mr. McVeigh by the name "Tim Tuttle," then refused to answer questions.

"There's a connection," a federal official said Monday. "To what degree or whether he's involved in Oklahoma City, we don't know."

In other developments, court--appointed attorney Michael E. Tigar arrived in Oklahoma City for his first meeting with the other bombing suspect, Terry Nichols.

Federal authorities also took note of an Arizona arrest warrant issued for Clark Vollmer, 41, who is wanted in connection with a Feb. 21 bombing that some agents suspect was a trial run for Oklahoma City. The bombing occurred near Mr. McVeigh's former residence in Kingman, Ariz.

Law enforcement officials in Arizona said they knew of no connection between Mr. Vollmer and Mr. McVeigh or between the Feb. 21 explosion and the April 19 attack in Oklahoma.

Jace Zack, chief deputy county attorney in Mohave County, said that he could not discuss the local case in detail but that it "involved a personal dispute."

Federal officials said they have not discounted anything in their investigation of Mr. McVeigh, especially his activities in the Kingman area. Mr. McVeigh lived there until shortly before the bombing.

Officials noted that Mr. Colbern also lived there and that he and Mr. McVeigh used the same private mail-drop business in Kingman. Authorities also found a letter Mr. McVeigh wrote to someone with the initials S.C.

"I think the general consensus is that S.C. could very well be Colbern," the official said. "He's got the same initials, and he asked for a lawyer and quit talking when he was asked if he knew McVeigh. That indicates something to us."

Officials said they hope to persuade Mr. Colbern to talk by offering the possibility of a reduced sentence on the federal firearms charge pending against him in

California. He is also charged with resisting arrest and being a fugitive in possession of a firearm.

Mr. Colbern isn't the only potential witness being questioned as agents look for help with a case built largely on forensic evidence, according to federal officials.

Officials said agents have developed a particular interest in four people: Mr. Nichols' brother James, who shares Mr. McVeigh's anti--government attitude; Mr. McVeigh's sister Jennifer, whose correspondence with her brother before the bombing is under review; Michael Fortier, a McVeigh friend from Kingman who is active in the so-called militia movement; and David Paulsen, a Chicago-area arms dealer who was traced through a business card that Mr. McVeigh was carrying the day of his arrest.

Attorneys for some of the potential witnesses have accused agents of trying to manufacture cases against their clients in an attempt at intimidation.

Federal officials said final decisions on possible witnesses will be made by the case's lead prosecutor, an appointment that could come as early as this week. Officials said Attorney General Janet Reno is reviewing several nominees for the job.

The lead attorney would help put together a prosecution team, which officials said could include a terrorism expert and someone from the U.S. attorney's office in Oklahoma City.

Terry Nichols, meanwhile, is scheduled to appear at a bond hearing Thursday, and he will be represented by Mr. Tigar.

"I'm appointed to represent Mr. Nichols, and I'll give it my best," Mr. Tigar said, declining to comment further.

Last week, Mr. Nichols told the court that he cannot afford his own attorney. U.S. District Judge David Russell appointed Mr. Tigar to represent him for a fee of \$125 an hour. That is the same amount being paid to Mr. McVeigh's court-appointed attorney, Stephen Jones.

Federal officials expect the Oklahoma City case to cost taxpayers at least \$21 million. In a recent congressional hearing, Ms. Reno estimated her office's 1995 expenses at \$10.5 million, with next year's costs expected to be higher.

Also Monday, Mr. Jones told reporters in El Reno, Okla., that he would go to court Tuesday in an attempt to delay by at least a month the demolition of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building.

Mr. Jones said he may bring in his own investigators to comb the structure for evidence. Additionally, he said his office has received a number of phone calls

from victims' families and other interested parties who prefer to delay the demolition.

Also, some involved in civil suits arising from the bombing have indicated they, too, want a delay, Mr. Jones said.

Local and federal officials have said the building probably will be demolished this week with explosives.