

## Mastermind of Blast Still on Loose, FBI Believes

Kansas City Star, The (MO)

June 14, 1995 | Page: A4 | Section: NATIONAL/WORLD

OKLAHOMA CITY - Investigators in the Oklahoma bombing believe the mastermind of the attack is still at large, a federal law enforcement source said Tuesday.

Timothy McVeigh, 27, and Terry Nichols, 40, are the only ones charged in the April 19 attack that killed 168 persons. They are being held without bail under a federal anti-terrorism law that could bring the death penalty.

``There's somebody still out there," a source close to the investigation said. ``Somebody had to point (McVeigh) at a target and tell him what to do. The guy isn't capable of doing it by himself."

The source cited McVeigh's failure to ``look at the back of his own car."

Less than 90 minutes after the bombing, McVeigh was pulled over by an Oklahoma Highway Patrol trooper for not having a license plate on his car.

Terry Nichols' brother James was arrested in Michigan as a material witness two days after the bombing. He was indicted on an unrelated explosives charge and released on bail a month later.

James Nichols, 41, is the ``sharper of the two brothers and a lot more hard-core in his beliefs," the source said. Authorities have said McVeigh and the Nichols brothers share a hatred of the government.

Nearly seven years ago, James Nichols talked about blowing up the federal building with a ``megabomb" and drew a diagram of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, according to an FBI informant quoted in court papers. Nichols denied that in an interview with CNN on Tuesday.

``I didn't even know there was a federal building out there," he said. Meanwhile, a senior federal official in Washington outlined other theories being debated by investigators:

``There's a view that Terry Nichols is the more leaderly brother of the two Nicholsons. The scuttlebutt is that Timmy (McVeigh) followed Terry like a puppy. But some people believe it may have been a partnership between Terry and Timmy," said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The source close to the investigation said authorities had not re-arrested James Nichols because they want to concentrate on building their cases against McVeigh and Terry Nichols.

``If they go out there and scoop him up then they start the clock" for bringing charges, the source said.

Prosecutors have asked for more time to indict Terry Nichols and McVeigh, saying the case is unusually complex. A judge agreed to an Aug. 11 deadline for McVeigh's indictment. A similar request has been made in Terry Nichols' case.

Also on Tuesday, FBI agents in Kansas sought help in the search for a red homemade trailer and plastic barrels.

Federal law enforcement sources believe the trailer was used to make ammonium nitrate purchases on Sept. 30 and Oct. 18 in McPherson, Kan. Ammonium nitrate is the type of fertilizer used to make the 4,800-pound bomb.

The FBI also is looking for information about the purchase of 55-gallon plastic barrels, blue or white with blue lids, that may have been packed with material used in the bombing, said Dave Tubbs, the FBI agent in charge of the Kansas City office. Tiny pieces of blue plastic were found in the bodies of bombing victims.

The agency set up a toll-free hot line to receive tips. The number is (800) FBI-OKLA (324-6552).