

## **John Doe No. 2 Not Part of Bombing Plot, Agents Say**

Houston Chronicle (TX)

June 15, 1995 | Page: 11 | Section: ANEWS

WASHINGTON -- After a nationwide manhunt, agents investigating the Oklahoma City bombing have found the man they believe is John Doe No. 2 but have concluded he wasn't involved, the Justice Department said Wednesday

The FBI is still trying to determine if a second man helped rent a truck believed to have carried the bomb.

Federal officials said the man who resembles the three John Doe No. 2 sketches is Army Pfc. Todd Bunting of Fort Riley, Kan.

A terse Justice Department statement, which did not give that name, said the man interviewed by the FBI "resembles the sketch previously circulated as the second of two men who rented the truck on April 17 and who had been called John Doe No. 2."

This man "was in Elliott's Body Shop in Junction City, Kan., on a day other than the day (April 17, 1995) that the truck that contained the explosive that damaged the Murrah building was rented," the department said.

"The bureau has determined that the individual who has been interviewed was not connected with the bombing," it added.

The Justice Department said the FBI "is continuing to investigate whether there was a second man who participated in the rental of the Ryder truck on April 17."

Officials said the statement left open the possibility that the chief defendant in the case, Timothy McVeigh, was accompanied by another man, of whatever description, on the day he rented the truck.

The Florence, S.C., Morning News, which first reported that Bunting, 23, was believed to be the man depicted in the sketches of John Doe No. 2, said he is heavy set with dark hair and a tattoo on his upper left arm. Those elements are in the FBI's description of John Doe No. 2.

Citing Bunting's wife, Denise, and two federal sources, the Florence paper reported that Bunting returned a truck to the Ryder rental office the day before McVeigh's appearance there and was mistakenly associated with McVeigh when descriptions of another possible suspect were given to the FBI.

When asked the real identity of the man referred to as John Doe No. 2, a law enforcement official pointed out the Florence newspaper story. A second official said the man is an Army private at Fort Riley, Kan.

Stephen Jones, attorney for McVeigh, the chief defendant in the case, said the elimination of Doe No. 2 as a suspect would strengthen his defense.

"If they have decided John Doe No. 2 is innocent, what does that say about the witnesses that claim to have seen him with John Doe No. 1, my client?" Jones asked. "Obviously, either the witnesses or the government are confused or perhaps both."

In the eight weeks that John Doe No. 2 has been hunted nationwide, he has been variously considered an AWOL soldier in California, a drifter in a Missouri motel, an Arizona fugitive and numerous others stopped because of resemblance or coincidence.

Some were held briefly until authorities concluded they were not the person depicted in three FBI sketches based largely on the Ryder rental agent's description.

But until June 1, John Doe No. 2 was always publicly described by officials as a conspirator in the worst act of terrorism on U.S. soil.

McVeigh, 27, and Terry Nichols, 40, are the only ones charged in the bombing. They are being held without bail under a federal anti-terrorism law that could bring them the death penalty.

In Oklahoma City, Michael Tigar, Nichols' attorney, filed a motion Wednesday opposing the government's request to delay his client's indictment until Aug. 11.

"The grand jury is being used as a secret government-controlled proceeding to amass trial evidence and to prevent the defense from having access to potentially exculpatory material," Tigar said in his motion. "The defense will be compelled to make its own motions for time."

U.S. District Judge David Russell granted a government motion earlier this week setting an Aug. 11 deadline for McVeigh's indictment

Caption:

Drawing: 1. Sketch of the possible suspect, John Doe No. 2; Mug: 2. Todd Bunting.

2. Associated Press