

McVeigh's Sister Tells FBI of Bank Robbery/She Was His Confidant Before Bombing

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WASHINGTON - Bombing suspect Timothy James McVeigh's younger sister Jennifer has told the FBI that her brother confided to her that he robbed a bank in the months before the Oklahoma City attack and drove around the West in a vehicle packed with explosives, sources familiar with the investigation said

In the second of two statements to FBI officials, Jennifer McVeigh says her brother told her he nearly killed himself last year when he narrowly avoided an automobile accident while carrying explosives. She also said McVeigh asked her to take two \$100 dollar bills to a bank and exchange them for smaller amounts so he could get rid of money stolen in a bank robbery, sources familiar with the probe said.

One of Timothy McVeigh's few confidants, Jennifer McVeigh made her statements after weeks of pressure by the Justice Department to get her to talk about her knowledge of her brother's activities before the April 19 terrorist attack. Law enforcement officials asked her to take a polygraph test in May, which she declined to do but which opened the door to more detailed discussions with investigators. Recently, authorities have been considering whether to charge her as an accomplice, though they have little, if any, evidence of direct involvement.

Authorities weeks ago seized a series of letters McVeigh wrote to Jennifer, 21, a college student in upstate New York, in which he discussed possible law enforcement surveillance of his and her activities. Investigators also have been probing an alleged illegal shipment of ammunition that Jennifer McVeigh mailed to her brother in Kingman, Ariz., where he lived in the months before the bombing.

Her statements apparently shed light on a theory that investigators have been exploring in their probe of McVeigh - that he supported himself and financed his alleged bomb plot through robberies. The bank robbery that Timothy McVeigh allegedly discussed with his sister occurred around the same time as a November 1994 Arkansas house robbery in which federal authorities believe McVeigh was involved. That robbery netted \$60,000 in cash, jewelry and firearms, some of which were recovered in the home of McVeigh's alleged accomplice in the Oklahoma City bombing, Terry Nichols.

As a scheduled Aug. 11 indictment deadline nears for the two prime suspects, sources say the government is leaning against charging Jennifer McVeigh because there is little to link her to the planning and execution of the Oklahoma bombing that killed 168 people.

She also has cooperated, and there is some fear that she could appear as a sympathetic figure before a jury.

Still, some hard-liners within the Justice Department believe the government must at least consider charging anyone involved, no matter how minor the role. Those officials point to anti-government literature and correspondence that Jennifer McVeigh had in her possession when authorities raided a Florida residence.

Tuesday, in Oklahoma City, U.S. District Judge David Russell ordered Timothy McVeigh to provide a handwriting sample for a federal grand jury investigating the case. McVeigh attorney Stephen Jones had argued that the government's request for a writing sample would violate his Fifth Amendment rights.

Government officials want McVeigh's handwriting to compare it to documents they have obtained, specifically a form used to rent the Ryder truck used in the bombing.

After Russell's ruling, McVeigh, under the advice of his attorneys, refused to provide a writing sample. Russell also ordered Jones to prepare a brief about why his client should not be held in contempt