

# McVeigh Kin Has Told FBI Of Robbery

The  
Washington  
Post

**The Washington Post**

July 19, 1995 | Pierre Thomas

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 roughly 20-page 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 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 confidantes, 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 in the case, though they apparently have little, if any, evidence of direct involvement.

Authorities weeks ago seized a series of letters McVeigh wrote to Jennifer, 21, a community college student and former waitress 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.

The sister's statements apparently shed new 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 a series of robberies, including some of banks in the West and Midwest. 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 particular 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 Lynn Nichols.

As a scheduled Aug. 11 indictment deadline nears for the two prime suspects, sources familiar with the investigation say the government is leaning against

charging Jennifer McVeigh because there is little to link her directly to the planning and execution of the Oklahoma City federal building 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 and the government would be seen as overreaching.

Still, some hard-liners within the Justice Department believe the government must at least consider charging anyone involved in the alleged plot, no matter how minor the role. Those officials point to anti-government literature and correspondence Jennifer McVeigh had in her possession when authorities raided a Florida residence that she visited this spring, and her family's Pendleton, N.Y., home. She has not appeared before the federal grand jury in Oklahoma City.

"I think it would be a stretch to indict her," said one senior law enforcement official. Another official noted that "you want to gain cooperation of peripheral figures. . . . She may be more valuable as a witness. . . . It's going to be a judgment call."

After Timothy McVeigh was arrested, FBI officials conducted more than 500 interviews with relatives, friends, associates and acquaintances, one source said. A search of Jennifer McVeigh's property uncovered about 20 letters from Timothy McVeigh detailing his frustration with the federal government, particularly about the 1993 standoff with the Branch Davidians near Waco, Tex.

"Any purported statements by Jennifer McVeigh can only be evaluated if a witness comes into court and testifies about the statement and is subject to cross examination," said Robert Nigh, one of Timothy McVeigh's attorneys. "It's impossible to evaluate based on what's been told to me in reference to when the statements were made, who they were made to and the circumstances under which they were made, including the circumstances leading to the statement."

Nigh said the FBI had used strong-arm tactics against witnesses, directing some not to talk to defense attorneys, and noted that some witnesses had changed statements after being pressured by law enforcement officials.

Yesterday in Oklahoma City, U.S. District Judge David L. Russell ordered Timothy McVeigh to provide a handwriting sample for a federal grand jury investigating the case. In the first of two hearings that McVeigh attended under tight security, another of his attorneys, Stephen Jones, had argued that the government's request for a writing sample would violate his Fifth Amendment rights.

McVeigh normally prints, so requiring him to write in cursive would amount to probing his mental process, a violation of the Fifth Amendment, Jones argued. 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, officials have said.

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.