

# McVeigh's Sister Cleared to Testify as Government Witness



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Federal authorities have cleared the sister of Oklahoma City bombing suspect Timothy James McVeigh of direct involvement in the nation's worst terrorist assault, setting the stage for her to appear as a government witness before a federal grand jury.

Following a Tuesday meeting with federal prosecutors that lasted more than four hours, Jennifer McVeigh yesterday testified as a cooperating witness before a grand jury, officially ending her status as a suspect. "She's not a target," her attorney, Joel Daniels, told reporters as McVeigh arrived in Oklahoma City Tuesday afternoon from her home in upstate New York.

Jennifer McVeigh, one of Timothy McVeigh's few confidantes, was expected to offer the jury what she had already told FBI agents, potentially damaging testimony about her brother's involvement with explosives and a bank robbery.

In the second of two roughly 20-page statements, Jennifer McVeigh, 21, had told the FBI that her brother said 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. Authorities have suspected that Timothy McVeigh and Terry Lynn Nichols, the only two men charged in the bombing, financed their attack through a series of robberies.

Prosecutors also were expected to press her for details about her brother's views on the federal government and the 20 letters she received from him, including one in which he warns her of possible law enforcement surveillance. The letters detail McVeigh's frustration with the federal government, particularly the 1993 standoff with Branch Davidians near Waco, Tex., sources said.

Jennifer McVeigh's scheduled appearance ends months of intense pressure and investigation by Justice Department officials to find out what she knew of the April 19 terrorist attack in Oklahoma that killed 168 people. After weeks of some internal debate at the Justice Department over whether to charge her in a conspiracy, government lawyers decided that they had little to tie her directly to the bombing. Furthermore, they theorized, she had offered some cooperation and might have made a sympathetic defendant before a jury, with the government seen as overreaching. Federal authorities said her testimony will provide more strength to an already formidable circumstantial case against her brother.

Timothy McVeigh's lawyers have complained about FBI strong-arm tactics against some potential witnesses, alleging that some agents had directed witnesses not to talk to the defense and that some had changed their comments after being pressured by law enforcement officials.

"We'll have to wait and see what she said, and then we'll see if our concerns are justified," Stephen Jones, Timothy McVeigh's attorney, said yesterday.

Jennifer McVeigh's testimony shortens an already short list of potential suspects in the case. Timothy McVeigh's Army buddy, Michael Fortier, has been involved in plea negotiations for weeks.