

McVeigh, Nichols Indicted in Bombing - Federal Officials Leave Open Possibility of More Suspects

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WASHINGTON - Is there anybody else out there?

Maybe.

Federal officials left open the possibility Thursday that others may be involved in the Oklahoma City bombing - others unknown to authorities and not in custody.

Since the blast, survivors and others have wondered whether such a massive crime could involve only the three Army veterans indicted Thursday.

"The grand jury found probable cause to believe that there are others involved," lead prosecutor Joseph Hartzler told reporters. "We will continue the investigation."

One indictment says main suspects Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols conspired "with others unknown to the Grand Jury." The indictment of Michael Fortier, who will be the government's key witness, alludes to "unindicted co-conspirators."

In Washington, FBI Director Louis Freeh said the bureau has not withdrawn its sketch of "John Doe No. 2," who has been the subject of a variety of sightings during the four-month investigation. But Mr. Freeh rejected a reporter's suggestion that the man in the sketch is an "active suspect."

"My answer is we haven't withdrawn the circular right now," Mr. Freeh said.

John Doe No. 2 possibilities have ranged from armed drifters to Mr. Nichols' 12-year-old son Josh. But federal officials said the sketch is most likely that of an innocent Army officer who was mistakenly thought to be with Mr. McVeigh when he rented the truck used to house the bomb.

That does not mean, however, that there are no other suspects. Federal officials cited witnesses say they who spotted Mr. McVeigh with another man, both in Kansas in the days before the bombing and in Oklahoma City the morning of the blast.

Officials also cited logistics: With phone records indicating that Terry Nichols was in Kansas at the time of the blast, some officials questioned whether Mr. McVeigh could have delivered the truck bomb and fled town without any help whatsoever. In order to railroad his client.

Mr. Jones, who represents Mr. McVeigh, also cited a severed leg found in the bombing rubble that has not been matched to a specific victim, saying it might belong to the "real bomber."

U.S. Attorney Patrick Ryan, however, said the leg may still be matched to one of the known victims.

Some bombing survivors have also said the idea of another bomber running free terrifies them.

"It petrifies my daughter," said Sherita Bell, whose 15-month-old granddaughter was killed in the blast. "And she never had a fear of anything. She's absolutely petrified wherever we go. It's the idea that anywhere you go, at any time, it could happen that quick. You're not safe anywhere."

Officials said all possibilities will be reviewed as they prepare to try Mr. McVeigh and Mr. Nichols.

"I think it's important that it be understood that the investigation continues," Attorney General Janet Reno said. "We will act based on the evidence, and I don't think people should generalize."

Caption: CHART(S): (The Dallas Morning News) The indictments at a glance.
Memo: A shorter version of this story appeared on p. 1A in the Home Final edition.