

McVeigh, 2 others charged in bombing

By **PAUL QUEARY**
The Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — After a massive investigation by hundreds of agents into thousands of tips, three former Army buddies with a grudge against the government were indicted Thursday in the deadliest terrorist attack on U.S. soil.

Timothy McVeigh, 27, and Terry Nichols, 40, each were charged Thursday with 11 counts in the April 19 bombing and could get the death penalty.

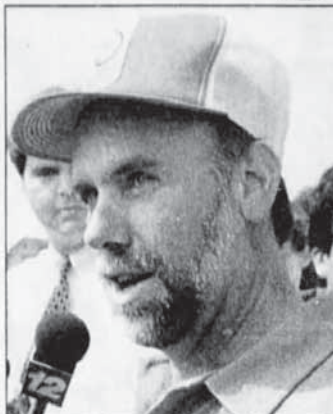
Michael Fortier, a 26-year-old who struck a deal with prosecutors, was charged with four lesser offenses and immediately pleaded guilty. He could get up to 23 years in prison in return for testifying against the others.

All three men were in the Army together at Fort Riley, Kan., and shared a deep distrust of the government and a love of weapons.

James Nichols, brother of Terry, had been facing federal explosives charges over test blasts on his farm, but the charges were dropped.

After initially focusing on possible links to right-wing militias nationwide, investigators concluded they did not have enough evidence to charge any others. Privately, a senior federal official said that the attack was probably not some kind of vast right-wing conspiracy but the work of maybe five malcontents, only two of whom did any "heavy lifting."

"We will pursue every lead



James Nichols
Charges dropped

based on the evidence. But we have charged everyone involved that we have evidence of at this point," Attorney General Janet Reno said in Washington.

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

The indictment does not specify a motive for the bombing, but prosecutors earlier alleged that McVeigh was angry at the government over the 1993 cult disaster at Waco, Texas.

A 4,800-pound, fertilizer-and-fuel-oil bomb in a rented Ryder truck ripped apart the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, killing 168 people and injuring more than 500.