

FBI Downplays Man's Account Of Truck Driver

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The FBI has apparently discounted the significance of a tire store employee's account of how he gave directions to a truck driver resembling bombing defendant Timothy McVeigh - just 30 minutes before the blast that destroyed the Oklahoma City federal building.

Mike Moroz, 25, had told the FBI he saw two men in a yellow Ryder truck and the driver stopped to ask for directions to "5th and Harvey" - the location of the federal building.

But Moroz said Tuesday he was never called before the federal grand jury, was never questioned by federal prosecutors and has not spoken to FBI agents for months.

The grand jury last Thursday indicted McVeigh, 27, and his friend Terry Nichols, 40, on 11 counts involving the attack.

"I mean one minute I'm the center of attention," said Moroz, who works at Johnny's Tire Co. at 401 NW 10 in Oklahoma City. "One minute, they want to hear everything I've got to say and they seem to be interested and, the next minute, you know

"I don't know if they are just waiting, getting all their stuff together first to talk to me. I just don't know. Nobody has ever said not another word to me. " Moroz had been considered an important witness early in the investigation. He was one of four witnesses asked by FBI agents to try to pick McVeigh out of a lineup, and his account of seeing McVeigh was related by an FBI agent at McVeigh's preliminary hearing April 27.

Most witnesses in the Oklahoma City bombing case were repeatedly interviewed by FBI agents, and eventually by federal prosecutors, over the almost four-month investigation leading up to the indictment. Crucial witnesses appeared before the federal grand jury.

Asked if the FBI has ruled his story out, Moroz replied, "Your guess is as good as mine. I really don't know. " Moroz said the driver - the one who resembled McVeigh - stopped at the store about 8:25 or 8:35 a.m. April 19 in a Ryder truck and asked directions to NW 5 and Harvey. The bomb went off inside a Ryder truck at 9:02 a.m. April 19 outside the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building - which was at the corner of NW 5 and Harvey.

"I got him out, walked him to about right here where you are standing," Moroz told a reporter outside the store. "I said, 'See that building with stripes on it.' He'd asked me where 5th and Harvey was. I mean that's as close as I could kind of point it (out). ... I didn't even know what the Alfred P. Murrah Building was until it blew up." Grand jurors allege McVeigh rented a 20-foot Ryder truck, parked it outside the federal building and detonated the bomb inside the truck. FBI agents have conceded Nichols was in Kansas at the time of the detonation.

FBI agents, however, spent weeks searching for an accomplice who they then thought helped rent the bomb truck April 17. Three sketches - labeled "John Doe 2" - were released worldwide.

Investigators later conceded the sketches were of an innocent Army private who helped a friend rent a similar truck a day later.

Moroz said he did not get a good look at the truck passenger.

Both wore ball caps, he remembered.

"The thing I'm more sure than ever is that there were two people in that truck," Moroz said.

The tire store employee said he picked out two men at an FBI lineup as resembling the driver of the Ryder truck. "I'm pretty sure (McVeigh) was the one I weighed my decision more to, but, like I said, they had them all exactly the same," he recalled.

His account is inconsistent with other facts known about the case. FBI agents believe McVeigh was familiar with the building's location. Witnesses said he cased the federal building Dec. 16 and was again in downtown Oklahoma City three days before the blast.

McVeigh's first defense attorney, John Coyle, has questioned the tire store employee's account since hearing an FBI agent relate it at the preliminary hearing. Coyle, who no longer is in the case, said, "the power of suggestion" can influence the memory of eyewitnesses after they see or read news accounts.

"I don't attribute any bad motive or dishonesty to any witness.

It's just difficult to recollect in light of the explosion and the publicity on Mr. McVeigh that followed," the defense attorney said.

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