

# McVeigh Mentioned Bombing To FBI

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In his first meeting with government agents after the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, Timothy J. McVeigh blurted out a statement investigators believe further incriminates him in the worst terrorist attack ever to take place on U.S. soil. McVeigh was being held in the tiny Noble County Jail in Perry, Okla., on a routine traffic charge when FBI agents paid him a visit two days after the April 19 bombing.

Did he know why they had come, they asked, according to documents in the case. "Yes," McVeigh replied. "That thing in Oklahoma City, I guess."

Until that moment, McVeigh had not been told that he was a suspect in the case, the FBI contends.

It was April 21, and what had begun as a massive FBI manhunt for suspected international terrorists had quickly and surprisingly moved to McVeigh's jail cell door, only an hour's drive away from the blast site.

For the first time, through FBI reports, government search warrants, the sheriff's logs and jail booking cards, as well as more than a dozen witness statements and interviews, a full picture has emerged of the eventful 48 hours from the time McVeigh was stopped by an unsuspecting law enforcement officer for driving without a license plate to the moment when FBI agents James L. Norman Jr. and Floyd M. Zimms arrived at the Noble County Jail.

The records have remained confidential since the bombing, many of them ordered sealed under a protective order issued by a federal judge.

Obtained by the Los Angeles Times, they reveal a McVeigh sharply different from the one sources had earlier portrayed. He was not the silent soldier who gave jailers only his "name, rank and serial number." Rather, he was often polite. And smooth.

## Traffic stop

Oklahoma State Highway Patrol Trooper Charles J. Hanger told the FBI that he stopped McVeigh at 10:20 a.m., just short of 80 minutes after the bomb went off in Oklahoma City. McVeigh was headed north on Interstate 35, driving a yellow 1977 Mercury Marquis with no license plate.

McVeigh was the first to step from his car. He was 26 then; four days away from his next birthday. The trooper also got out of his police cruiser, activating a video camera that recorded the arrest.

McVeigh took out a nylon camouflage wallet, removed his driver's license and handed it to Hanger.

"At this point," FBI reports say, "Hanger noticed a bulge in McVeigh's jacket, under his left arm, and immediately told McVeigh to slowly use both hands and open his jacket for him."

"I have a gun," McVeigh said.

He opened his jacket. A .45-caliber Glock military assault pistol, Model 21, with a Black Talon impact-expanding bullet in the chamber, was hanging in a shoulder holster. The clip in the pistol was loaded with 13 rounds of hard-ball, or high-velocity, ammunition. Another clip carried another 13 rounds. Hanger handcuffed McVeigh. He warned McVeigh that, armed as he was, he might have been shot.

"McVeigh responded that he felt he had the right to possess a gun to protect himself and had a permit to carry it in New York.

"He claimed to have been involved in Operation Desert Storm in the Persian Gulf and was living off the money he had saved while in the military," the reports say. "McVeigh further claimed he had also been living at the Michigan address on his driver's license with either a Jerry or Terry Nichols, who was the brother of a friend with whom he had been living in the military." In truth, he had lived in Decker, Mich., with James Nichols, the brother of Terry L. Nichols, who eventually would become his co-defendant in the bombing case.

Assigned Prisoner No. 95-057, initially McVeigh was charged that Wednesday with unlawfully carrying a weapon, transporting a loaded firearm in a vehicle, failing to display a license tag and having no insurance.

### **Gave Nichols' name**

He was asked for the name of a relative to put on the booking card. He gave them the name of James Nichols and the address of Nichols' farm in Decker.

He made just two phone calls over the next two days. One to a bail-bondsman in Stillwater, Okla. It is unclear whom he called the second time.

At that point, no one seemed to think for a moment that McVeigh might have been involved in the blast. And nowhere in the reports and interviews does anyone even hint that he confessed or took any responsibility for the bombing.

Jack Branson, a jailer, said McVeigh "certainly was a model prisoner."

He talked about Army life at Fort Benning, Ga., and Fort Riley, Kan. He talked about Desert Storm.

On Friday morning, McVeigh was brought down for his court hearing about 10:30 a.m.

Earlier, Sheriff Jerry Cook had taken a call from an agent of the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, inquiring whether they had McVeigh in custody. Cook told Jailer Farrell Stanley to put McVeigh on a federal hold.

The sheriff said he then cut off the jail phone lines and set up a security perimeter around the building. By noon, the FBI had arrived at his jail.

### **Mentioned bombing**

McVeigh was brought back down from his cell to meet the agents. After telling them he knew they wanted to talk about "that thing in Oklahoma City, I guess," he cut off any more questions. He wanted a lawyer.

They told him he would be flown to Oklahoma City. He said he was concerned about "my safety." Asked what he meant, McVeigh said, "you remember what happened with Jack Ruby."

The FBI placed him under arrest for the bombing. They fingerprinted him. Later the government, with his consent, took hair samples from his head, forearms and pubic area. They took scrapings from under all of his fingernails apparently in search of bomb residue.

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