

The Index-Journal, Greenwood, S.C., Thurs., September 14, 1995—9A

Judge unseals documents on search for McVeigh

PHOENIX (AP) — A fugitive biochemist caught up in the Oklahoma City bombing investigation had a passion for guns and possessed ammonia nitrate — the type of fertilizer that helped fuel the blast, unsealed documents show.

U.S. Magistrate Barry Silverman on Wednesday made public warrants involving Steven Garrett Colbern, a bit player in the probe whom authorities never publicly linked to the bombing or bombing suspect Timothy McVeigh.

The April 19 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah federal building in Oklahoma City killed 169 people and injured more than 500.

The material was released in response to a motion filed by KPXX-TV in Phoenix and the First Amendment Coalition, a media-funded group that advocates access to public records.

They also sought documents on a search of a mobile home and shed belonging to McVeigh's friend, Michael Fortier, of Kingman. Silverman denied the request.

Colbern was arrested May 12 in the former gold-mining town of Oatman by agents taking part in a huge federal investigation of western Arizona locales possibly frequented by McVeigh. He was wanted as a fugitive from federal weapons charges filed in California, where his last known address was in the coastal city of Oxnard.

The documents stemming from the search of the beer can-strewn mobile home Colbern shared with three other men in Oatman portray a man who shared McVeigh's



TIMOTHY McVEIGH
Charged in bombing

passion for firearms.

In Colbern's bedroom, agents found: a loaded .22-caliber Remington pump-action rifle, a loaded 12-gauge Browning shotgun, a loaded .22-caliber Colt revolver in a dresser drawer, an Arminius Titan revolver in another dresser drawer, an unloaded 12-gauge Mossberg pump-action shotgun behind a false wall in the closet, a loaded .38-caliber revolver wrapped in a green sleeping bag under the bed, and a bulletproof vest.

Outside, in a Volkswagen Beetle, was a carbine and 29 boxes of various kinds of ammunition.

A search of Colbern's 1975 Chevrolet pickup truck, which was parked in Bullhead City, turned up two ammonia nitrate bags — one empty, one full. That type of common fertilizer was used in making the Oklahoma City bomb.

A sworn statement by an investigator related an interview with an unidentified person who bought the contents of a storage locker Colbern had rented in Bullhead City.

That person said he found books and manuals entitled "Improvised Explosives," "OSS Sabotage and Demolition Manual" and "Expedient Hand Grenades." He turned the books over to investigators but said he got rid of chemistry books, Soldier of Fortune Magazines and photos of Colbern holding various weapons.

Fortier, 26, pleaded guilty to a four-count federal indictment Aug. 10, admitting to failing to report the bombing plot despite having prior knowledge, and to lying to FBI agents about prior knowledge and hiding physical evidence. He also pleaded guilty to conspiring to transport stolen weapons and to transporting those weapons.

He is to be sentenced after he testifies against McVeigh and Terry Nichols.



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