

OKLAHOMA BOMBING INVESTIGATORS HIT TROUBLESOME SNAGS

From Correspondent Robert Vito, CNN
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MIAMI, Florida (CNN) -- Federal, state and local law enforcement officials will attend a memorial in Miami Friday for victims of the bombing that devastated Oklahoma City last April. As the officials mourn the dead, they'll also recognize those who helped in the rescue and investigation efforts following the tragedy. Meanwhile, in Oklahoma City, the work continues, as prosecutors try to construct a solid case out of varying witness reports.

In particular, prosecutors have had more difficulty than expected in tying bombing suspect Timothy McVeigh to the Ryder truck that blew up the Oklahoma City federal building. Key witnesses have delivered a variety of stories about when and where the truck was seen and how many people may have been involved.

It seemed clear enough at first. Investigators traced the serial number on a rear axle found at the scene and said the bomb truck was rented at a Ryder outlet in Junction City, Kansas, the Monday before the attack. Ryder employees furnished a sketch of the man who rented the truck.

The owner of the Dreamland Motel then identified the sketch as McVeigh, who had stayed there four nights. But, she maintained, he brought a Ryder truck to the motel the day before the FBI says the bomb truck was rented.

"I know he was here Sunday afternoon with the Ryder truck," said Dreamland Owner Lea McGown. However, the FBI thinks McVeigh was in Oklahoma City that Easter Sunday, leaving his rusty old car there as a getaway car.

Another problem: if McVeigh did indeed drive the Ryder truck out of the lot on Monday, how did he get there in the first place? Was there someone else? Who took McVeigh to the Ryder rental place if, by then, his car was in Oklahoma City? Agents simply do not know and fall back on far too familiar words: "the investigation continues."

Another stumbling block: Tuesday at Geary Lake. This is where and when the FBI says the bomb was put together. Real estate agent Georgia Rucker drove by that morning. She said she saw a Ryder truck parked by the lake, but she reported she saw two other vehicles, as well. That could raise the ominous possibility that another party was involved as well.

Even more confusing for the FBI, Rucker said she and her son saw a truck at the lake days before the bomb truck was rented. She called this "very suspicious."

All of which means the FBI may have a long road ahead before it has anything close to an open-and-shut case against the man it thinks is responsible for the deaths of 169 people.