

German Disavows Link to Oklahoma City Explosion McVeigh Tried to Call Him Two Weeks Before Blast, Affidavit Says

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A former lieutenant in the West German armed forces who was telephoned by Timothy McVeigh two weeks before the Oklahoma City bombing denies any connection with the blast, according to a statement obtained by The Kansas City Star.

Andreas Strassmeir, 36, revealed in the affidavit that he met McVeigh at a gun show in Tulsa, Okla., in 1993 and that McVeigh tried to call him at a religious compound in eastern Oklahoma two weeks before the April 19, 1995, bombing.

In the statement, Strassmeir responded to questions raised by McVeigh's defense team, indicating that the defense may be attempting to show that the bombing was part of an international conspiracy of white supremacists and neo-Nazis.

But Strassmeir maintained that on the day of the bombing he was mending fences at Elohim City, a white separatist camp in the rugged Ozark foothills of eastern Oklahoma.

``Later that afternoon, I saw the news reports on television," he said. ``This is all I know about Timothy McVeigh and the Oklahoma City bombing. " The five-page statement was taken about two weeks ago in Berlin, where Strassmeir now lives, said his attorney, Kirk Lyons, who also dismissed attempts to link Strassmeir with the bombing.

``They're the source of all this right-wing conspiracy nonsense," Lyons said of McVeigh's attorneys. ``It's a lot of hooey.

I guess Andy was supposed to bring the bomb back to the United States, even though he wasn't in Europe any time this could've been done. I guess he'd have had to smuggle 5,000 pounds of fertilizer in a suitcase. " The blast demolished the Murrah Federal Building, killing 169 persons and injuring more than 500. McVeigh, 27, and his former Army buddy, Terry Nichols, 40, have been charged in the attack.

Lyons also revealed that McVeigh called his law office a day or two before the bombing and talked to one of his associates for about 15 minutes.

``He called here, and he was upset," Lyons said. ``His main thrust was that the Waco lawsuits weren't getting anywhere and we needed to take some real action. " Lyons, of Black Mountain, N.C., is handling a civil lawsuit for 23 families of people who died and were injured in the 1993 fire at the Branch Davidian

compound in Waco, Texas. Lyons said federal authorities questioned him about McVeigh's phone calls but didn't seem too concerned.

``If they thought for two seconds there was anything to this conspiracy thing, we'd have been the first people rounded up," he said.

Lyons, whose clients include Elohim City and members of the Ku Klux Klan, said Strassmeir's statement was given to the FBI. ``We've known all along that Andy at some point would probably need to give a statement," Lyons said.

Steve Mullins, an assistant U.S. attorney and spokesman for the prosecution team, said he hadn't seen the affidavit.

``I think his lawyer is doing this because his client is being hassled a lot in Germany, partly because his dad's a public figure," Mullins said.

Strassmeir's father served as general secretary to German Chancellor Helmut Kohl's Christian Democratic Union and was the party's representative in Berlin. He retired shortly after reunification of the country in 1990.

Mullins said he could not confirm whether Strassmeir was a suspect in the bombing but added: ``We have no outstanding warrants to bring him back to this country, and we didn't try to block him from leaving the United States." McVeigh's lead attorney, Stephen Jones, said that Strassmeir's affidavit didn't answer all his questions about his links to McVeigh.

``Nowhere in there does he deny that he has any knowledge of the Oklahoma City bombing, nor does he deny he may have participated, nor does he deny that the man who was ID'd to us as his roommate at Elohim City bears a striking resemblance to John Doe No. 2," Jones said.

In his statement, Strassmeir said he first came to the United States in 1988 to attend the 125th anniversary re-enactment of the Battle of Gettysburg in Pennsylvania.

Strassmeir said he lived at Elohim City off and on from 1991 until last August. While there, he said, he became active in trading military items and routinely attended gun shows in western Arkansas and eastern Oklahoma.

One of the shows, he said, was in Tulsa in the spring of 1993, a few weeks after Waco. It was there, Strassmeir said, that he stopped by a table where McVeigh was selling fatigues and military clothing.

``I sold him a U.S. Navy combat knife," he said. ``Later, I returned to this table and bought a shirt, pair of trousers and a pair of leather glove shells from him. During this transaction, we discussed the events that transpired in Waco, Texas, as it was being discussed by nearly everyone at the gun show and was so close to

the event. " Strassmeir recalled McVeigh as being ``a clean-cut white male in his early 20s" who seemed to be ``a nice person and a moderate. " ``He made no radical statements to me concerning Waco or the United States government in general," he said. ``As near as I can remember, we both agreed that it wasn't right for the government to use such force against a religious group or to kill them for what they believed in. " In May, Strassmeir learned that McVeigh had called for him at Elohim City two weeks before the bombing. The call reportedly was made within minutes of a call McVeigh allegedly made to Junction City, Kan., to reserve the truck used in the bombing.

``No one at Elohim City ever told me that someone had called for me at this time," he said. ``In fact, it was only after the FBI allegedly confirmed that a call had been made to Elohim City that it was remembered that an unknown male subject telephoned and asked for 'Andy. '"