

John Doe 2 Still Sought, Letter Says Prosecutors Doubt Witnesses Mistaken

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DENVER - The hunt for "John Doe 2," the mystery suspect in the Oklahoma City bombing case, is still on, the lead prosecutor confirms in letters filed Wednesday in the case.

The letters for the first time reveal prosecutors do not think two key witnesses mistakenly gave a description of an innocent Army private, Todd Bunting, when they were questioned about the suspect.

"The existence and identity of this John Doe II, whom we are confident is not Mr. Bunting, is the subject of a continuing investigation," special prosecutor Joseph Hartzler wrote defense attorneys in letters March 25 and April 5.

Two defendants, Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols, are awaiting trial on 11 counts in the truck-bomb attack against the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building. But the grand jury in their indictment alleged the men acted with "others unknown."

FBI agents used a shattered truck axle to identify where the bomb truck, a Ryder, was rented - Elliott's Body Shop in Junction City, Kan. Three witnesses at the shop described two men who rented the truck April 17, 1995 - two days before the attack.

FBI agents quickly tracked down McVeigh after witnesses identified him as the first man, "John Doe 1." Agents contended McVeigh used the alias "Robert Kling" to rent the truck.

Agents kept up a massive manhunt for weeks for "John Doe 2," with no success. Three sketches were released worldwide - two showing him in a cap.

The mystery sparked widespread conspiracy theories about the attack - even as the FBI manhunt slowed.

Last June, the FBI disclosed an innocent Army private "resembles the sketch previously circulated as ... 'John Doe 2.'" The private, Todd Bunting, later told reporters he had been at the shop April 18, 1995 - one day after the bomb truck was rented - helping a friend rent a Ryder.

Bunting said he wore clothing similar to that described on "John Doe 2," that he had a tattoo in the same place and that he had worn a hat to the shop. He said FBI agents took his hat - a white-and-black Carolina Panthers hat.

In the letters filed Wednesday, the prosecutor disclosed that shop owner Eldon Elliott and another witness, Tom Kessinger, were separately shown last June "the portion of a photograph of Mr. Bunting that revealed the cap he reportedly wore on April 18, 1995."

"They both stated that the cap was not the same one they saw on John Doe II, and they reaffirmed that this second individual accompanied 'Kling,' when he rented the Ryder truck on April 17, 1995," Hartzler wrote.

The letters were filed Wednesday by McVeigh's lead defense attorney, Stephen Jones, in support of his complaint that prosecutors are not turning over all the evidence necessary to his effort.

Jones argued the letters "suggest that the government, too, believes there were other participants in the bombing."

At a hearing April 9, - after the letters were written - prosecutor Beth Wilkinson said the government "has no

information showing anyone but Mr. Nichols and Mr. McVeigh were the masterminds of this bombing."

The attack left 168 dead.

An extensive history of the Oklahoma City bombing is available on The Oklahoman Online at www.oklahoman.net.

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