

Unsealed papers ID crucial witness/McVeigh's co-worker vital to FBI case

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WASHINGTON - Carl Lebron is the man who turned in Timothy J. McVeigh.

He was the first to recognize the FBI's composite drawing of McVeigh, the first to tell of his former co-worker's strong anti-government views, the first to describe his far-out beliefs in flying saucers and miniature submarines that sneak illegal drugs into the United States.

But since the bombing, the identity of Carl Edward Lebron Jr. has been kept confidential and he has steadfastly refused to talk publicly about the young man who worked alongside him at an upstate New York security company and now stands accused of the truck-bomb attack on the Oklahoma City federal building.

Now, in FBI interview transcripts unsealed Friday in U.S. District Court in Denver, where McVeigh goes on trial later this year, the 30-year-old Lebron lays out in graphic, emotional detail McVeigh's distrust of liberals, his odd, quirky turns of behavior, and his growing hatred of the national government.

Lebron was crucial to the FBI in its initial investigation of the bombing. He was one of their first chief witnesses. And he provided instant insight into the central figure in the investigation of the worst terrorist attack in the United States.

Lebron, for example, told the FBI that one of the last times he talked to his friend, McVeigh told him, in effect: "I can't stay out of trouble" or "Trouble will find me."

And McVeigh sometimes would criticize Lebron for not completely embracing the anti-Washington vitriol found in books, magazines and other correspondence that he passed around at work.

Lebron's statements are part of nearly 100 pages of new material made public for the first time Friday by Judge Richard P. Matsch. The documents were unsealed after media attorneys argued that too much material in the case against McVeigh and his former Army buddy and co-defendant Terry L. Nichols is hidden under seal.

With McVeigh to be tried beginning March 31, and with Nichols' trial to follow, prosecutors and defense attorneys have filed tens of thousands of pages of documents regarding the April 1995 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building. The blast killed 168 people and injured 600 others.

Next week, lawyers on both sides will meet in closed court conferences with Matsch to discuss more trial maneuvering, including plans by federal prosecutors

to comply with defense demands to introduce statements of other "unidentified co-conspirators" who are believed to have some role in the bombing but have eluded justice.

In addition to the Lebron revelations, another FBI transcript unsealed Friday says that Dave Shafer, a Lafayette, Ind., seed dealer, once was told by Nichols' brother, James Nichols of Decker, Mich., about plans to destroy the federal building.

James Nichols told Shafer that "his brother and an Army buddy had a newspaper clipping of an artist's rendition of a federal building . . . in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma," the document says.

"Nichols continued by telling that a person could get close enough with a bomb to blow up the new Oklahoma City federal building."

James Nichols was jailed as a material witness in the bombing, but later released when a federal judge ruled that the government did not have enough evidence to tie him to the crime.

McVeigh, Lebron said, thought the company work site they were guarding in the Buffalo, N.Y., area was involved in illegal narcotics traffic - proving that the government is behind the drug problems in the United States