

LAWYER SAYS FBI THREATENED WHISTLE-BLOWER

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WASHINGTON (AP) -- The FBI agent who claims the bureau's lab mishandled evidence from the Oklahoma City bombing was threatened with government discipline for answers he gave the defense in the case, his lawyer says in a complaint to the Justice Department.

The two government lawyers named in the complaining letter denied Thursday that they were trying to intimidate the lab whistle-blower, scientist-agent Frederic Whitehurst.

The allegations by Whitehurst, once the FBI's top explosives residue expert, that the lab mishandled evidence touched off an internal investigation of the world-renowned facility that could affect a dozen or more criminal cases. Whitehurst may be called as a witness by defense attorney Stephen Jones to challenge government evidence against Timothy McVeigh in the April 1995 bombing that killed 168 people. The complaint by Whitehurst's attorney, Stephen Kohn, is being reviewed in Deputy Attorney General Jamie Gorelick's office, Justice officials said Thursday. Earlier Thursday, Gorelick said the Justice Department inspector general who investigated Whitehurst's complaints found "a serious set of problems" in "a limited number of units within the lab and a limited number of cases."