

GOVERNMENT INFORMANT'S BOMB CLAIM CALLED `LIE' LEADER OF WHITE ARYANS SAYS STORY COULD `BREAK MCVEIGH TRIAL WIDE OPEN'

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A paid informant who claims to have tipped off federal agents in 1994 that a group of extremists talked about blowing up the Oklahoma City federal building was branded a liar Thursday by one of the men she named.

Dennis Mahon, the Tulsa, Okla., leader of a group named White Aryan Resistance, said the informant's story could turn the upcoming Denver trial of Oklahoma bombing suspect Timothy McVeigh upside down because if true, it would mean some government agents knew of threats against the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building.

Mahon told the Rocky Mountain News that fellow Tulsa resident Carol Howe, at the time a secret informant for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, was the one who instigated talk about committing violent acts.

The government declined to comment on Howe's statements.

Mahon said that two days after the April 19, 1995, bombing that took 168 lives, Howe told FBI agents that Mahon and a German citizen named Andreas Strassmeir discussed bombing federal installations sometime in November or December 1994.

She told the agents the list of potential targets had been narrowed to the Internal Revenue Service building in Tulsa, the federal building in Tulsa, or the federal building in Oklahoma City.

But Mahon, who was called before a federal grand jury in Tulsa last month in its investigation of extremist activity, said neither he nor Strassmeir brought it up.

``That was Carol's idea," Mahon said. ``I said, `Carol, I'm tired of you talking about violence. I'm above ground, I'm an activist in the movement. I can't be around illegal activity."

Strassmeir surfaced as a subject in the investigation within days of the bombing, but investigators don't believe he or Mahon were involved.

``She is going to break McVeigh's trial wide open if she says Strassmeir and I talked about blowing up the building, because that's a big lie," Mahon said.

The only apparent link that has surfaced publicly is a telephone call made two weeks before the bombing by someone using McVeigh's long-distance calling card.

The call was to the Muldrow, Okla., camp of Elohim City, a white separatist religious commune where Strassmeir lived.

Elohim City leaders said the caller, believed to be McVeigh, asked to speak to Strassmeir, who wasn't there. Strassmeir admits meeting McVeigh at a Tulsa gun show in 1993, but says he hasn't seen him since then.

Mahon said Howe tried to entrap Strassmeir and two other Elohim City residents during a secretly videotaped visit to her house, where she asked them to arm several inert hand grenades. They refused.