

# PHOTO MAY BACK 2 WITNESSES' ID OF MCVEIGH

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A photograph showing Timothy McVeigh with a scraggly beard and unkempt hair may bolster testimony allegedly linking him to the Oklahoma bomb plot.

The grainy color picture surfaced Wednesday in Denver U.S. District Court as prosecutors and defense lawyers scrapped over the reliability of government witnesses against McVeigh.

Judge Richard Matsch will decide whether the testimony can be introduced at McVeigh's trial, which begins March 31 in Denver.

Prosecutors showed the photograph of the bearded McVeigh to support the testimony of two Kansas witnesses: rancher Tim Donahue and racing fuels salesman Glynn Tipton.

Donahue, who employed bombing co-defendant Terry Nichols in 1994, identified McVeigh as the man visiting Nichols on the Donahue ranch 6 1/2 months before the bombing. But Donahue described Nichols' friend as bearded, hairy and sloppy - so different from McVeigh's recent crew-cut, spit-and-polish appearance that defense lawyers said Donahue must be wrong.

Tipton identified McVeigh as the man who asked him the next day at a drag race about buying two chemicals that Tipton later learned could produce a bomb. He, too, described the man as bearded.

Oklahoma City FBI agent John Hersley said investigators found the picture of the bearded McVeigh in a photo album at Nichols' house after the bombing. It shows McVeigh standing in front of the ranch house where Nichols lived while he was working for Donahue, Hersley said.

McVeigh's height also became an issue.

Some witnesses said a man they saw before the bombing and later identified as McVeigh was 5-foot-10 or 5-foot-11.

Hersley said McVeigh had reported his height sometimes as 6 feet 1 and as 6 feet 2 on his Michigan driver's license and his military records.

To resolve the dispute, Hersley testified, a physicians' assistant measured McVeigh last Saturday at the Federal Correctional Institution in Jefferson County, where McVeigh is being held.

His official height: 6 feet, 1/2 inch.

Wednesday's hearing produced another revelation: The man who sold the explosive ammonium nitrate the government believes went into the bomb isn't sure the purchaser was Nichols, as the government has charged.

The salesman, Frederick Schlender of Mid-Kansas Cooperative in McPherson, Kan., also said a man accompanying the purchaser wasn't McVeigh.

Prosecutor Scott Mendeloff declined to say whether the government knows who that other person was.

McVeigh's fingerprint has been found on a receipt for one of the two ammonium nitrate purchases, made Sept. 30 and Oct. 18, 1994, at Schlender's business.

Schlender's account again raises the spectre of "others unknown" that the grand jury charged were involved with the defendants in the bombing plot. While the government has never officially ended the search for the mysterious John Doe 2, or possibly even more people, it has reported no new leads.

CAPTION(S):

Color Photo (2)

Timothy McVeigh.

CAPTION: Scott Mendeloff, one of the prosecuting attorneys in the Oklahoma City bombing trial, addresses reporters during a lunch break in a pretrial hearing Wednesday. By Patrick Davison / Rocky Mountain News.