

LANDLORD: WITNESS BOASTED OF REWARD DEFENSE HINTS MONEY MIGHT HAVE INFLUENCED WHAT MECHANIC TOLD FBI.

Rocky Mountain News

Rocky Mountain News (Denver, CO)

February 27, 1997 | Kilzer, Lou

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A key government witness linking Timothy McVeigh to the truck used in the Oklahoma City bombing bragged to his landlord that he was going to collect a \$2 million reward, the landlord said Wednesday.

Witness Tom Kessinger, whose descriptions led to the sketches of bombing suspects "John Doe 1" and "John Doe 2," said that he was "going to be getting a lot of money," landlord Anita Krolczyk said. "He was so excited."

Kessinger, a mechanic at the Kansas Ryder truck agency that rented the bomb truck, has changed his story in recent months in ways that appear to help the prosecution.

The defense has suggested that some witnesses' identifications of McVeigh may be affected by a possible reward.

But Leesa Brown, a prosecution spokeswoman, said that the \$2 million did not affect Kessinger's testimony. She said Kessinger provided the information for the sketches before the reward was announced.

Brown also said that Kessinger and Krolczyk "have a history," referring to a landlord-tenant dispute between the two.

Krolczyk claims that Kessinger first refused to leave his rented cottage and "trashed" it when he finally did. She admits disliking her former tenant.

Kessinger could not be reached Wednesday. His telephone number in Junction City,

Kan., is unlisted.

Witnesses have been a particular sore spot for the prosecution. Though several say they saw McVeigh in Oklahoma City the day of the bombing, none is expected to testify at his trial, which begins March 31 in Denver.

Krolczyk said that shortly after the reward was announced, she met Kessinger in her backyard.

“He told me that he's the one who did the sketching with the FBI and that then he found out on TV how much was the reward for it,” Krolczyk said. “I mean he was completely beside himself.”

Kessinger gave FBI agents descriptions of the two men he said entered Elliot's Body Shop in Junction City on April 17, 1995. That was two days before a truck bomb leveled the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, killing 168 people.

Kessinger said “John Doe 1” rented the truck under the name Robert Kling while “John Doe 2” watched.

The sketch of “John Doe 1” helped lead to McVeigh, who had been arrested for a traffic violation 90 minutes after the bombing. The government then launched a futile dragnet for “John Doe 2.”

About two months after the bombing, federal agents decided that the “Doe 2” described by Kessinger was actually Todd Bunting, who had come into the Ryder agency the day after “Kling” rented the bomb truck.

Kessinger, however, held to his original story until last November, 19 months after the bombing. He now agrees that he confused “John Doe 2” with Bunting.

At a hearing last week, Kessinger also shifted emphasis on his story that “John Doe 1” was wearing camouflage or military-type clothing when he rented the truck.

McVeigh's defense maintains that a video snapshot of McVeigh taken at a McDonald's restaurant about 15 minutes before “Kling” arrived at the Ryder agency shows him wearing civilian clothing.

Last week Kessinger said he wasn't certain what clothing “Doe 1” was wearing but was certain that “Doe 1” was McVeigh.