

Bomb Theory Swirls McVeigh call fuels scenario

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March 11 - A day before a bomb shredded the Alfred P. Murrah federal building in Oklahoma City, Timothy McVeigh spoke to a member of the legal team that sued the government on behalf of survivors of the fiery Branch Davidian siege near Waco, Texas.

In the conversation with Dave Hollaway, a director of the C.A.U.S.E. Foundation, McVeigh said the Waco lawsuit would be fruitless because "justice is corrupt" and that the government would triumph over the Davidians again, Hollaway told The Denver Post.

Hollaway, who with C.A.U.S.E. lawyer Kirk Lyons arrived in Waco shortly after the standoff began, said he suggested patience to the caller who had identified himself only as a patriot.

"I said, 'You are absolutely right.' But I added that if we win this case, it will put a damper on the government," said Hollaway. "If we lose, it will have put hypocrisy on trial.

"He started saying, 'These people need to be sent a message'," Hollaway recalled. Before the man could finish, Hollaway said he told the caller he needed to watch what he said, adding that it wasn't smart to use a telephone to talk about such matters. "Most callers don't mean anything by it, and if they do I don't want to know it," he explained.

But because of that call, which Hollaway reported to the FBI after the federal building was bombed, he said that he and others in conservative, patriot circles are being drawn into a conspiracy theory being developed by McVeigh's lawyers. Hollaway said that McVeigh's defense team has concocted an Oliver Stone-like scenario, in which they hint that a former German army officer and friend of Hollaway's, and the former Grand Dragon of the Ku Klux Klan in Oklahoma, as well as others, may have a connection to the bombing.

While Hollaway didn't know the name of the man who called him last April 18, he said that both the FBI and McVeigh's lawyers later said that telephone records showed the call had come from McVeigh, who has been charged along with Terry Nichols with eight counts of murder.

Rob Nigh, a lawyer on McVeigh's defense team, said he could not comment about their investigation or the telephone calls and referred callers to the court documents.

McVeigh is accused of driving a truck bomb to the federal building April 19, 1995, and setting it off. The bomb exploded on the second anniversary of the Waco fire. The government claims the Waco siege and loss of life infuriated McVeigh and was the motive behind the bombing.

Hollaway said McVeigh described himself as a "patriot" and asked if he could ask some questions about Waco. But McVeigh was not the "average" caller who phones C.A.U.S.E. because "most people who call me are ranters," said Hollaway. "This guy wasn't. He sounded intelligent."

Hollaway said he remembers the April 18, 1995, telephone conversation because he was about to fly from C.A.U.S.E.'s North Carolina offices to Waco to attend anniversary services for the dead Davidians. The next day, as he stood in the rain at Waco, Hollaway said he was told by television crews that the Murrah building had blown up. Hollaway immediately connected the bombing to the telephone call. "It clicked that instant, right then," said Hollaway. "They (the news people) were running around, and I was going, "Holy s---! I will be lucky to live through this. This is really bad.""

Hollaway said that he also thought the bombing might be "trouble" for him because he had been a bomb technician in the military. When he returned to North Carolina, he telephoned the FBI and reported the call, Hollaway said. Hollaway and Kirk Lyons have spent years representing Klan members and others with similar views. They describe C.A.U.S.E. as an international civil rights legal foundation that defends the rights of the "unpopular, the powerless and the politically incorrect."

Hollaway said many in Klan-like organizations call C.A.U.S.E. for advice. The telephone call to Hollaway was not the only one McVeigh allegedly made to someone with connections to, or acquaintances in, white supremacist groups. A day before the bombing, McVeigh also allegedly attempted to call Andreas "Andy" Strassmeir, a friend of both Hollaway and Lyons. Strassmeir, a German national and former German army officer, had lived with both Lyons and Hollaway. Strassmeir's grandfather helped found the German Nazi Party, Hollaway said. At the time of the Oklahoma City blast, Strassmeir lived at a commune called Elohim City in northeast Oklahoma founded by Robert Millar, a close friend and spiritual adviser to white supremacist Richard Snell.

Snell, a member of the Covenant, the Sword and the Arm of the Lord (CSA), in 1984 killed a black Arkansas state trooper and a Texarkana, Ark., pawnshop owner he thought was Jewish. He was convicted and sentenced to death for the pawn broker's killing. Four of Snell's five death warrants were signed by then-Gov. Bill Clinton.

Snell's highly publicized execution took place 12 hours after the Oklahoma City bombing. After the execution, Millar took Snell's body to Elohim City, where it is buried.

Strassmeir said in an affidavit filed in the criminal case against McVeigh that he met McVeigh at a Tulsa gun show shortly after the Waco fire. He said McVeigh was selling fatigues and military clothing.

"I sold him a U.S. Navy combat knife with a sheath," Strassmeir said in the affidavit. "Later I returned ... and bought a shirt, pair of trousers and a pair of leather gloves from him. During this transaction we discussed the events that transpired at Waco ...

"As near as I can remember, we both agreed that it wasn't right for the government to use such force against a religious group or to kill them for what they believed in." In the affidavit, Strassmeir said he gave McVeigh a business card belonging to Elohim City and Robert Millar, and may have told McVeigh that his name was "Andy."

According to the affidavit, Strassmeir said that was his only contact with McVeigh. Only later did he learn that the FBI and McVeigh's defense team claimed McVeigh had tried to reach him at Elohim City.

On the day of the bombing, Strassmeir said he was at Elohim City mending fences.

According to Hollaway, Strassmeir moved back in with him and brought McVeigh's Army fatigues with him after he left Oklahoma.

Hollaway said McVeigh's name was ripped from the clothing. However, the clothing still bears McVeigh's initials and the "Big Red One" patch identifying McVeigh's Army unit.

While living at Elohim City, Strassmeir met another resident, Dennis Mahon, the former Oklahoma Grand Dragon of the White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan. On several occasions, Strassmeir said in the affidavit, he stayed with Mahon in Tulsa while attending gun shows or traveling in the area.

Shortly after the bombing, Elohim City became the home of CSA founder Jim Ellison, whose compound was raided by federal and state agents on April 19, 1985, exactly 10 years before the Oklahoma bomb exploded.

The CSA was closely linked to The Order, the Neo-nazi group that in 1984 killed Denver talk show host Alan Berg. Some members of CSA were members of The Order. In 1987, members of both the CSA and The Order were indicted for plotting to overthrow the government. However, all eventually were acquitted by a federal jury in Fort Smith, Ark.

Ironically, Ellison testified for the government. Hollaway says Strassmeir left Elohim City because of his distaste for Ellison - a "government informant." In what Hollaway likened to an "Oliver Stone"-like scenario - referring to conspiracy theories featured in the film "JFK" - he said McVeigh's lawyers now are raising the possibility that Strassmeir, Mahon and others may have a link with the Oklahoma City tragedy.

In court documents, McVeigh's attorney Stephen Jones claims that Mahon told the defense that he was an explosives expert, had bombed buildings in the past, and had been denied admission to England because Interpol listed him as an international terrorist.

Hollaway, helped Strassmeir leave the United States early this year out of fear that the government might jail him. Hollaway said that to imply that he, Lyons, Mahon or Strassmeir were involved with Oklahoma City was "ridiculous."

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