

Report Says McVeigh Considered Dallas as Target

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Playboy magazine said in a story on its Internet site Tuesday that Timothy McVeigh looked at Dallas as a bombing target but picked Oklahoma City because it had a single federal building.

The story, which also details Mr. McVeigh's alleged activities on the day of the bombing, was based on "documents prepared under the direction" of the law firm of Mr. McVeigh's chief attorney, Stephen Jones.

It is the second story in two weeks in which defense documents are cited as the basis for a report in which Mr. McVeigh takes responsibility for the truck bombing of Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in April 1995, killing 168 people.

The Dallas Morning News reported March 1 on defense documents that said Mr. McVeigh admitted driving the explosives-laden rental truck and that a daytime attack was needed to ensure a "body count." In a statement released Tuesday night, Mr. McVeigh's attorneys said: "These escalating reports of alleged statements by Mr. McVeigh are corrupting the heart of the jury system. The American ideals of justice are being held hostage to sensationalism." Prosecutors declined comment.

Mr. McVeigh and co-defendant Terry Nichols are charged with murder and conspiracy in connection with the bombing. Mr. McVeigh's trial is scheduled to begin March 31 in Denver.

Reporter Ben Fenwick said his story in Playboy was based on lawfully obtained documents prepared by Mr. McVeigh's attorneys.

"I believe these are different documents from those reported in The Dallas Morning News, yet [they] appear to corroborate basic facts in the News story," Mr. Fenwick wrote.

"Playboy has made every effort to confirm the factual accuracy of the following account," he said. "In cases where there was insufficient, inconclusive or contradictory information, we have relied on the documents." Mr. Fenwick said that as a reporter in the Oklahoma City area, he covered the bombing for several news organizations, including Reuters. A Reuters editor in Washington confirmed that Tuesday.

The magazine article described Mr. McVeigh's background, including his anti-government views, and reported his travels in the days before the bombing, including the route he took to Oklahoma City.

The magazine said Mr. McVeigh was enraged by the raid by federal agents on the Branch Davidian religious compound near Waco and decided to "go on the offensive. " It said he bought ingredients for a homemade bomb, including nitromethane racing fuel and fertilizer.

The magazine said Mr. McVeigh had decided against placing a bomb in Kansas City or Little Rock, Ark.

"He and Nichols looked for a federal building in Dallas while buying nitromethane at a racetrack, but the phone book showed no single federal building. They selected Oklahoma City instead," the magazine said.

On the day of the bombing, it said, Mr. McVeigh drove the truck alone. He pulled a wire connected to the primary fuse to the bomb as the truck reached the Murrah building, the magazine said.

He then "shut off the engine with the truck still in drive and set the parking brake," it said. "He took the key out of the ignition and dropped it behind the seat. Then, he got out and locked the door behind him. " The magazine said Mr. McVeigh believed no one saw him except a woman who was leaving the building as he parked the truck. He took off jogging and was about 20 feet behind a YMCA when the bomb went off at 9:02 a.m. "The explosion threw him against the wall of the building," the magazine said. "He stepped over a fallen power line and continued down the alley, pulling out his earplugs as he did so. " Mr. McVeigh encountered a mailman en route to a car he had left in a parking lot three days earlier, the magazine said. The mailman "looked at him and said, `Man, for a second, I thought that was us who blew up. ' " " `Yeah, so did I,' Mr. McVeigh said," according to the magazine.

He was arrested later that day when an Oklahoma state trooper pulled him over on Interstate 35 north of Oklahoma City