

BRITISH NEWSPAPER LINKS IRA TO DETONATOR IN OKLAHOMA CITY \ MCVEIGH TRIAL BEGINS TODAY IN DENVER

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The IRA supplied the detonator used in the bombing of the U.S. federal building in Oklahoma, The Sunday Telegraph reported, quoting documents filed by lawyers for chief suspect Timothy McVeigh.

McVeigh goes on trial today in connection with the April 19, 1995, explosion that killed 168 people and wounded hundreds more. The bombing was the worst terrorist act on American soil and McVeigh, who is accused of murder and conspiracy, faces the death penalty if convicted.

The Sunday Telegraph said defense documents submitted to U.S. District Court in Denver, where McVeigh will be tried, allege that a neo-Nazi cell had been conspiring to blow up a U.S. federal building in early 1995 and had received assistance from Sinn Fein, described as "the Irish terrorist group."

Sinn Fein is a legal political party allied with the outlawed Irish Republican Army, which has been fighting for more than 25 years to end British rule in Northern Ireland.

Sinn Fein President Gerry Adams, speaking in Belfast yesterday, said claims that the IRA supplied the detonator were "preposterous rubbish."

The Sunday Telegraph, a respected conservative weekly, said the source of the allegations about Sinn Fein-IRA involvement in the Oklahoma bombing is Carol Howe, an American government informer.

She alleges that the link with the IRA was Andreas Strassmeir, a former German army officer who became chief of paramilitary operations at an armed white separatist enclave in Elohim City, Okla., The Sunday Telegraph said.

McVeigh's lawyers will argue that the neo-Nazi group at Elohim City, which calls itself the Aryan Republican Army, was responsible for the Oklahoma City bombing, the paper said.

Howe, a white-separatist insider turned government informant who federal officials privately dismiss as unstable, was indicted on March 12 in Tulsa, Okla., on unrelated bomb-threat conspiracy charges.

She claims she overheard Strassmeir and Dennis Mahon, a white supremacist, plot bombings of federal buildings while meeting at Elohim City. She told a free-

lance writer she relayed the conversation to her federal handlers well before the Oklahoma City bombing.

According to The Sunday Telegraph, McVeigh's lawyer Stephen Jones has visited Northern Ireland and interviewed a member of the IRA, who was not identified, as well as officials from Britain's domestic intelligence service MI5 and counterterrorism experts.

Jones has also been relying on British forensic scientists with detailed knowledge of IRA bombing techniques to help prepare his case, it said.