

ELOHIM CITY



ABC Good Morning America

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JOAN LUNDEN, Host: Prosecutors in the Oklahoma City bombing trial have released a list of more than 300 witnesses they plan to call to the stand.

A hundred of those are expected to testify about phone calls that allegedly tie suspect Timothy McVeigh to the bombing, and investigators have looked into the possibility that McVeigh was in contact with a separatist group in Elohim City, Oklahoma.

ABC's Valeri Williams has more on the intriguing connections between Elohim City and the bombing.

VALERI WILLIAMS, ABC News: (voice-over) When the cameras are let in, which they rarely are, everyone sings and dances at Elohim City. But twice in the past 15 years, plots to blow up the Federal Building in Oklahoma City have been traced back to this remote commune of radical white separatists.

RICHARD SNELL: *"I know I have no malice, I have no anger."*

VALERI WILLIAMS: (voice-over) The first plot was revealed during the trial of Richard Snell, an antigovernment racist who wanted to destroy the Murrah Building with a rocket launcher in 1982. Most significantly, Snell was executed in Arkansas on other murder charges on April 19, 1995, the very day the Ryder truck exploded. According to prison records, before he died, Snell was seen chuckling as he watched the Federal Building burn on TV.

(on camera) In the case of Timothy McVeigh, federal authorities have tried to downplay the connection of Elohim City to the bombing. But for the defense, the compound has become fertile ground to poke holes in the government's investigation.

(voice-over) Two weeks before the explosion, in a motel room registered to Timothy McVeigh, someone called Elohim City and asked to speak with Andy. The man left a message saying, *"Tell Andy I'll be visiting soon."* Andy is Andreas Strassmeir, seen here at Elohim City only a month after the bombing. Strassmeir is a German national whose grandfather helped to found the Nazi Party.

ANDREAS STRASSMEIR: *"You know, I've been shown a picture of him, and I know him from the TV. And they asked me, 'Is that the guy you bought something from the gun show?' I said, 'It could have been him, but I don't recognize him.'"*

VALERI WILLIAMS: (voice-over) Strassmeir claims his memory of McVeigh is hazy. But government documents before and after the bombing show that federal agents were tracking Strassmeir in what was noted as a "sensitive" investigation. At one point, they termed him "armed or dangerous." However, Strassmeir says authorities waited more than a year, and after he had returned to Germany, to talk with him.

ANDREAS STRASMEIR: *"An investigator who works for McVeigh`s defense team, he looked me up last fall -- last October. He was the only person who was ever interested in me, you know."*

VALERI WILLIAMS: (voice-over) And interested they are. McVeigh`s defense team has unveiled a complex conspiracy theory revolving around Strassmeir and this woman. Carol Howe was an ATF informant who also lived at Elohim City. She claims to have warned federal agents that Strassmeir and others were planning the bombing weeks before it happened, something federal authorities now deny.

WELDON KENNEDY, Former FBI Agent: *"There was no lead, no information, no matter how far-fetched, that was not pursued to the nth degree."*

VALERI WILLIAMS: (voice-over) Since the bombing, the number of radical white separatists with ties to Elohim City who have been arrested or are wanted by authorities sounds like a veritable who`s-who list. In February, a police camera captured this dramatic shoot-out between two brothers and Ohio authorities during a routine traffic stop. The brothers were on their way to a white separatist meeting. One of them lived for a time in Elohim City. And last January, Strassmeir`s roommate, Mike Brescia, and two other residents of Elohim City were indicted by a federal grand jury for 22 bank robberies in which bomb threats were made.

Once, Elohim City was an out-of-the-way stop on the road to Oklahoma City. Now the question remains whether a path of conspiracy and violence leads to its gates.

In Denver, I'm Valeri Williams for Good Morning America.

JOAN LUNDEN: Thank you, Valeri