

McVeigh defense implicates white separatists His attorneys suggest blast was planned at Elohim City compound.

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Timothy McVeigh's attorneys are alleging that former residents of Elohim City, a white separatist compound, plotted and took part in right-wing violence that may have included the Oklahoma City bombing.

Among those they implicate are members of the Aryan Nations, the Posse Comitatus and former Kansas City Ku Klux Klan leader Dennis Mahon.

"The defense believes that there is credible evidence that a conspiracy to bomb federal property, very possibly the Murrah Building, is centered in Elohim City ...," said Stephen Jones in documents filed in the 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

In the weeks before the bombing, Jones contends, the compound "was populated by individuals who previously had engaged in armed confrontation with the federal government ... including neo-Nazis with training manuals on how to make ammonium nitrate bombs." Federal authorities won't discuss Jones' allegations as jury selection continues in McVeigh's trial, except to say that they have thoroughly investigated a possible conspiracy behind the bombing plot.

"We have no evidence of any individuals being involved other than the two named in the indictment," said prosecution spokeswoman Leesa Brown, referring to McVeigh and co-defendant Terry Nichols.

However, the government's indictment against the bombing suspects states that they acted with "others unknown." Federal agents have visited Elohim City and met off-site with its founder and patriarch, Robert Millar, to ask about the activities of former residents. And the FBI has examined nearly 10,000 telephone calls to or from radical-right figures, including three phone numbers at Elohim City.

But Millar has denied any involvement in the Oklahoma City explosion, as have Mahon and others.

"If the ... bombing or anything like that was planned here, it was certainly not to my knowledge," Millar said.

What is known about the compound's connections to extremists is that: McVeigh called Elohim City two weeks before the Oklahoma City bombing, reportedly looking for a German national who lived there.

Six men who called themselves the Aryan Republican Army have been indicted on charges of robbing 22 banks in the Midwest, including one in Kansas City and one in Overland Park. Four of the six suspects had either lived at or had close ties to the compound.

The Oklahoma City bombing occurred on the same day as the execution of a white supremacist in Arkansas. That man - Richard Wayne Snell - in 1983 had been involved in a plot to blow up the Murrah Federal Building. He is buried at Elohim City.

A nationwide manhunt is under way for two white supremacists who escaped after shootouts with Ohio police in February. One is wanted for questioning in the 1996 triple slayings of an Arkansas gun dealer and his family. Both suspects had ties to Elohim City.

"I suppose some of these people thought Elohim City would be a good place to hide out," Millar said.

Elohim City ("Elohim" is Hebrew for "God") is a secluded community 35 miles northwest of Fort Smith, Ark. A six-mile, rutted gravel road leads to the 400-acre compound, which consists of about 20 houses and trailers, several outbuildings, a logging business and a dome-shaped polyurethane structure that residents use for their daily two-hour worship service.

Millar founded the community in 1973. Today about 80 persons live there. Inhabitants adhere to the Christian Identity doctrine, which contends that white Anglo-Saxons, not Jews, are God's chosen people.

Many Identity followers also believe that the United States will come under attack, leading to a race war. Only Identity followers will survive, they believe, and for that reason many have stockpiled supplies.

Questions first arose about Elohim City when it was revealed that McVeigh had used a pre-paid calling card to phone someone there two weeks before the blast. He allegedly asked to speak to Andreas Strassmeir, who was chief of security at the compound.

Strassmeir, now in Berlin, has denied having any role in the bombing. He said in an affidavit that he lived at Elohim City off and on from 1991 until August 1995 and met McVeigh at a Tulsa gun show in 1993.

Strassmeir's name resurfaced recently in connection with a Tulsa woman who served as an informant and lived at Elohim City before the Oklahoma City bombing.

Carol Howe said she was introduced to Elohim City by Mahon, who now lives in Tulsa and spent weekends at Elohim City from 1992 to 1995. Howe maintains

that Mahon and Strassmeir talked of bombings and cased the Murrah Building three times in the months before the blast.

Authorities confirmed that Howe had been an informant for the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, but they dispute that she provided them any useful information about bombing plots.

But Jones in court filings attempts to implicate both Mahon and Strassmeir in the bombing. Strassmeir, Jones suggests, was involved either as a co-conspirator or a government informant.

``The defense has made a sufficient showing that there is a high probability, certainly at least a high possibility, that Mahon and Strassmeir are part of a conspiracy that planned to bomb a federal building, and may have in fact been part of the conspiracy to bomb the Murrah Building," Jones said.

Besides Strassmeir, Mahon was friends with Michael Brescia and Mark Thomas two men indicted in January in a string of Midwest bank robberies that authorities think the two committed to bankroll their white supremacist movement.

Brescia, 24 lived, at Elohim City in 1994 and 1995 and moved out sometime after the bombing, Millar said. His roommate was Strassmeir. Brescia has pleaded not guilty to the robberies and his attorney contends that he was not part of the white supremacist movement.

Thomas, 46, is the Pennsylvania director of Aryan Nations, one of the most well-known racist groups in the country. He is a member of the right-wing Posse Comitatus and has pleaded guilty to plotting several of the robberies.

Millar said Thomas occasionally visited Elohim City. The last visit, Millar said, was less than two weeks before the bombing.

Two others indicted in the robberies--Scott Stedeford, 27, and Kevin McCarthy, 19,--also had lived at Elohim City, Millar said.

Stedeford has been convicted of some of the robberies and McCarthy has pleaded guilty to several of them.

Another Elohim City connection is the relationship between Millar and Snell, a racist executed by the state of Arkansas on the same day as the Oklahoma City bombing. Snell had been sentenced to death for killing a Texas pawnshop owner he mistakenly thought was Jewish.

In 1993, Snell and other extremists, including Jim Ellison, the former leader of the white supremacist group The Covenant, the Sword and the Arm of the Lord,

had plotted to blow up the Murrah Building with a rocket launcher. The plot was revealed during a 1988 sedition trial in Fort Smith, Ark.

Ellison, who imprisoned on weapons and racketeering charges after authorities raided his compound on the Missouri-Arkansas border, now lives at Elohim City.

The latest incident with ties to Elohim City is a manhunt for brothers Chevie and Cheyne Kehoe, who allegedly shot it out with police near Cincinnati. A search of their vehicle turned up guns, bulletproof vests, FBI baseball caps and U.S. marshal's badges.

Chevie Kehoe is being sought for questioning in the slayings of William Mueller, 53, a Tilly, Ark., gun dealer; his wife, Nancy, 28; and her daughter Sarah Elizabeth Powell, 8. Millar said Cheyne Kehoe lived at Elohim City for several weeks.

Chevie, he said, visited the compound, but didn't live there.

Caption:

PhotoCAPTION: "If the bombing or anything like that was planned here, it was certainly not to my knowledge," said Robert Millar, patriarch of Elohim City, a white separatist compound near the Oklahoma-Arkansas border. Timothy McVeigh's attorneys suggest that a conspiracy to bomb the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City is centered in Elohim City.

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