

McVeigh defense focuses on Ryder truck timeline



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DENVER (CNN) -- Defense lawyers in the Oklahoma City bombing trial of Timothy McVeigh launched their case Thursday by trying to cast doubt on one of the prosecution's cornerstones -- that McVeigh rented the bomb-carrying Ryder truck two days before the Oklahoma City blast.

Herta King and Renda Truong testified they saw a Ryder truck in the parking lot of the Dreamland Motel in Junction City, Kansas, on Easter Sunday, April 16, 1995 -- three days before the bombing.

McVeigh stayed in the motel under his own name in the week leading up to the blast, and prosecutors contend he rented the truck at a nearby body shop on Monday, April 17.

King, whose son was staying at the motel, said she's certain she saw the truck on Easter Sunday because she brought an Easter basket filled with chocolate eggs to her son.

"I could not see my son's car because the Ryder truck blocked the view," she said.

Truong said she saw the truck that Sunday as she was going to lunch with her family.

Conflicting testimony on truck

Both women testified that they did not see anyone in or around the Ryder truck. They also gave conflicting accounts on the size of the truck. King said it was not 20 feet long; Truong said she believed it was a 20-foot truck.

The defense also called Leonard and Diana White of Cheney, Kansas, who testified they saw a yellow Mercury with Arizona plates -- believed to be McVeigh's car -- in the motel parking lot on Easter Sunday morning.

The Whites both testified that they never saw a Ryder truck in the Dreamland parking lot.

Eric McGown, the co-manager of the motel, testified during the prosecution's case that he saw McVeigh in a Ryder truck but was unsure whether it was the Sunday or Monday before the bombing.

McGown's mother, Lea, who also worked at the motel, was expected to testify later Thursday that she saw McVeigh in the truck on Sunday.

Prosecutors say McVeigh signed a dated agreement for the truck using the alias Robert Kling. They say he packed it with a fuel-and-fertilizer bomb and detonated it outside the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building on April 19, 1995, killing 168 people.

The prosecution wrapped up its case Wednesday after calling 137 witnesses in 18 days.

The defense's first witness, Oklahoma architect Dan Harris, told the court that he built a model of the motel for defense attorney Stephen Jones.

The implications of his testimony were not immediately clear. Harris is a longtime friend and neighbor of Jones and was apparently being called as an expert witness.

Medical examiner: Stray leg found

Also Thursday, McVeigh's attorneys introduced testimony about a stray leg found in the bombing rubble, appearing to imply that the bomber died in the explosion.

Oklahoma State Medical Examiner Fred Jordan -- the prosecution's last witness Wednesday -- was recalled by the defense to testify about the leg.

Jordan said eight bodies were recovered from the federal building missing a left leg, but nine left legs were found. Eight of those legs were matched up with a victim, but the ninth, about 16 inches long and weighing 18 pounds, remains unidentified, Jordan said.

Jordan said he could not tell if it was a man's or woman's leg, but based on the size of the bones, it would be a person about 5 feet 4 inches to 5 feet 6 inches tall. The foot did not have nail polish but the leg appeared to be shaven, Jordan said.

The defense is expected to argue that the leg could have belonged to someone involved in the bomb plot, perhaps "John Doe No. 2" -- the name given to a sketch which was drawn based on a description of a man one witness said was present when the Ryder truck was rented.

Last survivor pulled from wreckage to testify

The defense is expected to call between 30 and 40 witnesses, including Daina Bradley -- the last survivor pulled from the bombing wreckage. Bradley lost her mother, sister and two children in the bombing, and rescuers amputated one of her legs to free her from the rubble.

Jones referred to Bradley in his opening statement. He told the jury that she was inside the federal building before the blast and saw a Ryder truck pull up outside.

According to Jones, she saw somebody get out of the passenger side of the truck -- someone "short, stocky, olive-(skinned), wearing a puffy jacket with black hair, a description that does not match my client. She did not see anyone else."

Government sources say Bradley has given varying descriptions about the man she saw outside the building.