

Terrorism: What's next after Oklahoma City?

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Page 1/Section 1A

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NEW YORK (Reuters) — Timothy McVeigh's conviction has not comforted America's experts on terrorism and conspiracy. They wonder how many more McVeighs are out there and whether the government has in custody all the people who conspired in the April 19,1995, bombing of the Oklahoma City federal building, which killed 168 people. "Twenty percent of me thinks there is a missing defendant out there," said Gerald Posner, author of a highly praised probe of the study.

He reflected a sentiment common among many experts. McVeigh was found guilty Monday of all 11 charges of murder and conspiracy in the bombing. His alleged co-conspirator, Terry Nichols, will be tried at a later date. Posner, who has investigated the Oklahoma City case, agrees with prosecutors that statements from many of those who said they saw a "dark-skinned" man with McVeigh in the days before and on the day of the bombing were not credible.

But several came from believable people, he said, and "it makes you wonder." For example, Posner cites statements made by the owner of the Dreamland motel in Junction City, Kansas, who recalls hearing several people talking in McVeigh's room the night before the bombing and getting steamed about it because McVeigh had bargained her down and paid only \$20 for the room, instead of \$24. She wondered if he was sharing the room.

The woman was not called- as a witness because she said she clearly recalled that McVeigh had rented a Ryder truck on Easter Sunday, the day before prosecutors say he did.

Then there is Mike Moroz, a gas station attendant in Oklahoma City who says two men pulled up in a Ryder truck just before the blast and asked for directions to the street where the Alfred P. Murrah building was. He said one man was McVeigh and he later identified him in a police lineup. But he was not called as a witness because of his statements about seeing a second man who did not fit the description of Nichols but who looked like "the dark-skinned man" that other witnesses had spoken about.

Nichols has pleaded not guilty and has witnesses who will say he was nowhere near the scene on the day of the blast.

Posner also questions how much help McVeigh had in mixing the explosives and placing them in the Ryder truck. Was it a one-man job, or a two- or three-person job?

Other experts ask if McVeigh's conviction, which may be in the next few days by a jury vote for the death penalty, will provoke a violent reaction from extremist groups, drive them deeper underground or serve as a warning. "The problem is that the ingredients that led to Timothy McVeigh are still there. There are plenty of explosives and weapons and ideology around," said Richard Baudouin, the director of publications for Hate Watch, a group that monitors extremist activity.

The Anti-Defamation League, which also monitors extremists recently reported that on the surface the militia movement appears to be stagnating across the United States, with membership and public activity dropping or moving into areas of "paper terrorism"