

Bombing Grand Jury Calling 6 Witnesses This Week

Ed Godfrey, Diana Baldwin | The Oklahoman | June 13th, 1997

Six people have been subpoenaed to testify this week before an Oklahoma County grand jury investigating the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, The Oklahoman has learned.

They are scheduled to be the first witnesses to appear before the panel. The grand jury was convened June 30 after two people highly distrustful of the federal government led a successful initiative petition drive for another bombing inquiry.

State Rep. Charles Key, R-Oklahoma City, and Glenn Wilburn, an Oklahoma City accountant who lost two grandsons in the blast, do not believe the federal government is telling the truth about the April 19, 1995, explosion.

The bombing resulted in 168 deaths. Persian Gulf War veteran Timothy McVeigh, 29, was found guilty in federal court June 2 of blowing up the building with a fertilizer bomb in a Ryder truck. Eleven days later, a Denver jury sentenced McVeigh to death. Co-defendant Terry Nichols, 42, is scheduled for trial Sept. 29.

Key will get his opportunity this week to share his suspicions with the Oklahoma County grand jury. The lawmaker said he received a subpoena last week to appear Tuesday.

"I am looking forward to going before the grand jury," Key said. "I am anxious for us to win this battle that we have been fighting so long to reveal the truth.

"I am going in there and tell them everything we have prepared and gathered in the last 1 1/2 to 2 years.

"I believe in juries, and I hope the grand jury will be very thorough in its investigation."

Also subpoenaed is Kyle Hunt, a Broken Arrow banker who reportedly saw a Ryder truck followed by a light-colored sedan at Broadway and Main about 30 minutes before the explosion .

Hunt, 52, was coming to a meeting at an Oklahoma City law office and told the FBI there were three people in the car. The driver of the car, whom he later identified as McVeigh, glared at him as they passed. He cannot identify anyone in the truck. He said both vehicles headed toward Bricktown.

Hunt confirmed he was subpoenaed to appear Monday but declined to be interviewed.

David Snider, who worked at a warehouse in Bricktown, also said he has been subpoenaed by the grand jury. Snider, 37, told The Oklahoman he has been "waiting 26 months for this to happen."

Snider claims he witnessed McVeigh with another man in a Ryder truck driving through Bricktown the morning of April 19. McVeigh was the passenger, he said.

Snider said he was waiting for two men in a rental truck to pick up a delivery from the warehouse when he saw the Ryder truck.

He said the truck traveled slowly, "a speed like a person walks. To me they looked like they were looking for an address." Snider, 37, said he started waving to get their attention, thinking it was the truck to pick up the delivery. The truck drove slowly past him and the passenger started "mouthing off," Snider claims.

Snider believes he knows who accompanied McVeigh, and he also believes his life is in danger for what he knows.

"I have felt that way for a long time. I have moved a couple of times. I was afraid of living by myself.

"I was just doing my job. ... I was told there were two people in a rental truck coming to get equipment. Those were the only two people I saw in a rental truck. It has all led up to this."

Snider plans to take his own drawing of the man he saw with McVeigh the morning of the bombing and a tape of a television interview with the man he saw.

Also subpoenaed was Dennis Mahon, a self-proclaimed white separatist and leader in the White Aryan Resistance. The Tulsan was subpoenaed because his former girlfriend, Carol Howe, an informant for the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, claims he and German national Andreas Strassmeir were casing the Murrah Building.

McVeigh's attorneys wanted to call Howe as a witness in his federal trial, but U.S. District Judge Richard Matsch ruled her testimony was irrelevant. That is one of the issues McVeigh's attorneys are raising on appeal.

Mahon, who operates a Dial-A-Racist hotline, accuses Howe, also from Tulsa, of being "a pathological liar" and of "trying to make a buck off me." He denies any involvement in the Oklahoma City bombing.

"I had nothing to do with it. I don't know who did. I was as shocked as anybody."

Mahon, 46, said he does consider McVeigh "a tragic hero."

"He is a hero in that he struck back against all odds, and it's tragic that his timing was wrong. I think if he bombed the building early in the morning it would have been a symbolic gesture. You don't start a revolution by killing civilians."

Mahon said he will appear before the grand jury but will likely take the Fifth Amendment and refuse to testify.

"I'm going to have to. I don't know what is going on. I don't like grand juries. It is a fishing expedition. I can't believe they jumped on me so ... fast. See, they can't get Strassmeir because he is in Germany. So I'm available."

Also subpoenaed to appear is V.Z. Lawton, a 66-year-old management specialist for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Lawton confirmed he is subpoenaed to appear Tuesday.

Lawton was in the Murrah Building when it exploded. He was treated at an emergency room and later released.

"I lost a lot of hearing and had a hole in the back of my head. Blood was still running out of it that afternoon, and I didn't know about it. I had a lot of trash, Sheetrock and dust in my eyes that they had to clean out. That was the main reason I went (to the emergency room.)"

Lawton said he was driven home that day by four employees from the General Services Administration. They told him they were sent from Fort Worth to Oklahoma City on April 18 to do a security check on the Murrah Building.

"That puts them there a day earlier to do a security check of the Murrah building which lends itself to someone having some prior knowledge that something might have been happening. Or it could be a fluke."

One of the men indicated he worked on elevators, Lawton said. They said they were walking to the building when it exploded, he said.

Also scheduled to testify is Oscar Johnson, the general manager of the Mid-Western Elevator Co. Johnson said he is subpoenaed to appear Tuesday. His company maintained the elevators in the Murrah Building.

"We had a couple of guys who were supposed to be in the building (when it exploded). They were across the street in the courthouse. The federal inspector was late getting there, so they were waiting for him in the coffee shop. They

were just coming out when the bomb went off."

Johnson, 48, said the seven elevators in the Murrah building were undergoing an annual inspection on April 18 and 19.

"I guess what I am going to be called to testify about is that No. 2 elevator, (the one) the agents were on."

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms agent Alex McCauley claims he and an agent from the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration were in an elevator that dropped five floors - to the third - when the bomb went off. Johnson says that couldn't have happened.

"It did not happen," Johnson said. "In a free fall condition, the cab would have gone up with just two people in there."

Johnson said his workers found the elevator between the parking garage and the first floor. That is where the elevator had to be when the blast blew the doors off and power was lost, he said.

When the elevator was found, a wall was pushed against the top of it "and there is no way you could have gotten the doors open. Our guys were the first ones there to open the top emergency access, and there was no one in it.

"So that is what they are bringing me in to testify about. There are conflicting stories. They said they fell, and we said they didn't."

Johnson also disbelieves a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) report about the size of the crater left by the bomb. That report states the blast left a 28-foot diameter crater, but Johnson claims the crater size was only about 16 feet.

Johnson said one of his elevator servicemen has a photograph that show the crater was smaller than FEMA claims.

Johnson considers his testimony only a "small piece of the puzzle."

"I just hope the grand jury gets all the information. ...

"I'm not saying everything you hear out there is true. There are facts that need to be investigated."

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