

INFORMANT WITH TIES TO MCVEIGH ACQUITTED CAROL HOWE'S TESTIMONY HAD BEEN BARRED FROM BOMBING TRIAL IN DENVER

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Byline: From staff and wire reports

An Oklahoma jury Friday acquitted a former federal informant with ties to the Timothy McVeigh trial of conspiring to make bomb threats.

"I'm thrilled," Carol Howe said shortly after the verdict was returned about 10:30 p.m. She cried as she left the courthouse with her family and attorney.

Howe, 26, on trial in Tulsa, was accused of conspiracy, willfully making a bomb threat and possession of an unregistered destructive device. James Viefhaus, 28, her fiance, was convicted on the same charges last week.

Howe was an informant for the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. She infiltrated Elohim City, a white supremacist compound in eastern Oklahoma, in late 1994.

She told her government contact that people there were talking about bombing federal buildings. People there even made a trip to Oklahoma City in February 1995, two months before the bombing that killed 168 people, Howe testified Friday.

When they realized that she had gathered information on anti-government groups just before the bombing, lawyers for McVeigh sought to have Howe testify at his trial in Denver. They hoped she could raise the possibility that others were involved in the bombing, but U.S. District Judge Richard Matsch refused to allow the testimony.

McVeigh was convicted June 2 and condemned to die.

Howe's attorney, Clark Brewster, said Howe would have given ``compelling" evidence that others besides McVeigh ``had not only the intent to bomb buildings but also the means to carry it out."

Angela Graham, the ATF agent who was Howe's contact, testified Thursday that her agency deactivated Howe in March 1995 because of concerns about her mental stability. They renewed her service two months later in hopes Howe could identify ``John Doe No. 2" as a suspect in the Oklahoma City bombing, Graham said.

Graham also testified that Howe developed no information useful to Oklahoma City investigators. She said she lost contact with her informant after June 1995.

But Howe said she was never told she was no longer under contract with the government. So she continued to associate with white supremacists, and that's why she collected racist rhetoric and recorded offensive messages - many of them hateful toward blacks, immigrants and Jews - because she did not want to arouse suspicion among supremacists that might put her in danger.