

Ex-Informer Testifies of Bomb Warnings



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A former federal informer, on trial here for threatening to blow up government buildings, today testified that she had warned authorities before the Oklahoma City bombing that white supremacists were discussing bombing federal buildings in the state.

Carol Howe, 26, was indicted in March on charges that she and her live-in boyfriend, James Viehhaus, had threatened and conspired to bomb federal buildings. Today, a weeping Howe maintained she was never told that the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms had terminated her as an informer. She said that she believed her anti-government activities were part of her paid undercover work. Viehhaus was convicted here last week. But tonight, Howe was acquitted of all charges.

The former debutante had told a federal jury that months before the April 1995, attack on the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, which killed 168 people, she had informed her ATF handler that residents of an Oklahoma separatist compound were making "apocalyptic" statements and suggesting something would happen in spring 1995.

Howe also confirmed that before the blast she had given ATF agent Angela Graham a copy of "The Turner Diaries," a racist, violent novel that federal prosecutors contend was a blueprint for the Oklahoma City bombing.

"The first thing I thought was 'they did it' . . . that the people who talked about bombing the buildings had taken the next step," Howe testified, explaining her reaction to news accounts of the Oklahoma City bombing.

Federal authorities have maintained that Howe's warnings were general in nature and that she never specifically mentioned the Murrah building. Nonetheless, Howe became a cause celebre for far-right conspiracy theorists and lawyers for convicted

bomber Timothy J. McVeigh, who suggest others were involved in the bombing. In May, Howe received international attention when U.S. District Judge Richard P. Matsch refused to let her testify for McVeigh, saying her testimony was irrelevant.

McVeigh was condemned to death in June for his role in the crime; co-defendant Terry L. Nichols goes on trial in Denver next month.

ATF agent Graham testified this week that Howe was an informer for the agency from August 1994 until a month before the Murrah blast. Graham said Howe's role as informer ended because she was deemed unstable and was associating with skinheads. Howe was reactivated, Graham said, when she called the ATF after the Murrah bombing, saying she could identify John Doe No. 2, then a suspect in the blast.

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