

# McVeigh witness cleared of conspiracy

## Former informant says she thought she was on assignment

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TULSA, Okla. — A former government informant who had been sought as a witness in the Oklahoma City bombing trial that ended in Timothy McVeigh's conviction has been cleared of conspiracy and other charges.

A federal jury found Carol Howe innocent late Friday on counts of conspiracy, making a bomb threat and possessing a destructive device.

She had claimed she was playing the part of a white supremacist because she thought she was still working as an informant for the Bureau of

Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.

"I'm thrilled," she said through tears. "Justice has finally been served in this case."

Her fiance and roommate, James Dodson Viefhaus Jr., was convicted July 25 of the same charges. He has not been sentenced.

"Obviously we're disappointed," prosecutor Neal Kirkpatrick said. "I felt we had a good case."

McVeigh wanted Howe as a defense witness in his trial on charges of blowing up the Oklahoma City federal building. She had said that while working as an informant, she over-



Carol Howe

heard a white supremacist and a German discuss blowing up federal buildings in the months before the April 1995 attack. The judge ruled her testimony was irrelevant.

McVeigh has been sentenced to death. The issue of Howe's testimony could figure in his appeal.

In a motion filed Friday in Denver, McVeigh's lawyer repeated claims that his client was denied a fair trial because of pretrial publicity and errors, including the judge's refusal to fully investigate claims of juror misconduct.

U.S. District Judge Richard Matsch has not indicated when he will rule on motions for a new trial.

Howe, 26, was accused of compiling a list of bomb ingredients, acquiring photographs of federal offices in Tulsa and using her home telephone to distribute racist information.

Howe said she was trying to protect herself from dangerous associates who might find out she was a snitch.

"I dug myself deeper in the movement and cloaked myself in it in order to look that much more authentic," she testified.

One of Howe's tasks as an informant had been to infiltrate Elohim City, a white separatist community in eastern Oklahoma. Prosecutors said her undercover stint ended a year and a half before the alleged crimes occurred in December 1996.

Angela Graham, the ATF agent who oversaw her work, testified Thursday that her agency stopped using Howe as an informant in March 1995 because of concerns about her mental stability. Her services were renewed briefly two months later, but Graham said she lost contact with Howe after June 1995.