

Grand Jury Hears Of Terrorist 'Hunch'

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A caller to the U.S. Secret Service four days before the Oklahoma City bombing said "he had a hunch that there was a terrorist threat," but such calls are not unusual, a source told The Oklahoman. Oklahoma County grand jurors Thursday heard from a third witness about the 8:30 a.m. call received by Opal's Answering Service in Oklahoma City. The caller's name and telephone number were given to the county grand jurors investigating conspiracy theories in the April 19, 1995, bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Building. The explosion resulted in the deaths of 168 people. Timothy McVeigh, 29, was convicted June 2 and sentenced to die for the bombing. The trial of bombing defendant Terry Nichols, 42, is scheduled to start Sept. 29. The caller did not give a time or place of the terrorist threat, the source said. There was no mention of a bomb by the caller, the source said. "He indicated he had been up all night with a hunch," the source said. The Secret Service has had a contract with Opal's Answering Service since 1974. The Secret Service receives four to six telephone calls a week of a similar nature or actual bomb threats, the source said. The call was reported to law enforcement investigators after the bombing. Vance Dewoody, owner of Opal's; his employee, Pat Houser; and another unidentified employee have appeared before the grand jury this week. State Rep. Charles Key, R-Oklahoma City, has said Houser received the call warning of a bomb in the Secret Service office in the Murrah Building. Key led the drive for the grand jury investigation. Houser did not answer the phone call, the source said. Meanwhile, a Grand Prairie, Texas, witness who testified Wednesday told reporters he stayed another day in Oklahoma to confront state Attorney General Drew Edmondson over statements he made challenging the credibility of witnesses claiming to have seen John Doe 2. After McVeigh's sentencing, Edmondson said, in his experience, witnesses who are not called in a trial would give testimony that was not credible or conflicted with other evidence. Dennis Rodney Johnson, 32, said he wanted to meet with Edmondson and Gov. Frank Keating "so that in the future when they made such statements, they would actually know who they were talking about." Johnson met with Edmondson and said he was promised that Keating would meet with him on another day. Gerald Adams, Edmondson's spokesman, said the attorney general told Johnson he was sorry his comments were taken personally. Johnson said he accepted Edmondson's apology but still objected to Edmondson's comments. "I felt his statements are misguided. It gives the appearance they are trying to deny the existence of John Doe 2. And I did not feel that was right," Johnson said. Grand jurors heard from a Kingman, Kan., convenience store employee who told grand jurors McVeigh and another man were in his store six or seven hours before the bombing. Richard Sinnett, 42, said McVeigh and the man were in a Ryder truck that was towing a trailer with a large plastic tank almost filled with liquid. "The strange part was the tank. I never saw a Ryder truck pulling a tank," Sinnett said. The person with McVeigh was wearing a blue shirt and blue jeans and pumped the gas, he said. A brown pickup and a white-colored car followed the Ryder away from the store, Sinnett said. Sinnett said McVeigh's companion did not fit descriptions of John Doe 2. Sinnett said the man he saw was short, 170 to 180 pounds with light brown hair. Other John Doe 2 sightings have been of a man with dark complexion. Federal prosecutors said the original FBI sketch of John Doe 2 depicted an innocent Army private. The description came from an employee of the Junction City, Kan., body shop where the truck used in the bombing was rented. Sinnett said an investigator for McVeigh's attorney, Stephen Jones, interviewed him. He said he was subpoenaed by the defense to testify at McVeigh's trial, but never went to Denver. Only one witness is scheduled to appear today before the grand jury .

This story was written from reports by staff writers Diana Baldwin, Ed Godfrey and Judy Kuhlman.

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