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FBI 'knew in advance' of Oklahoma bomb

THE trial of Timothy McVeigh for the 1995 Oklahoma bomb was a government cover-up to shield FBI agents who knew about the plot but failed to stop it, according to a book by Ambrose Evans-Pritchard alleging massive corruption under President Clinton.

With McVeigh already sentenced to death for the blast which killed 168 people, and Terry Nichols, an alleged accomplice, standing trial, the book's claim will spark anger, particularly in Oklahoma City where witnesses saw bomb squad officers before the explosion, and 70 per cent of citizens believe that the government is lying about it.

The Secret Life of Bill Clinton includes a transcript of an official debriefing of Carol Howe, an undercover informant for the Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms. Howe gave warning that the Oklahoma federal building has been a target and said: "Strassmeir has talked frequently about direct action against the US government. He is trained in weaponry and has discussed assassinations, bombings and mass shootings . . ."

Andreas Strassmeir, a former German army officer, had penetrated a neo-Nazi commune called Elohim City (God's City), from which, the book says, the terrorist attack may have been planned and executed. Despite this and despite interviewing more than 20,000 witnesses, the government has interviewed Strassmeir only on the telephone a year after the bombing when he had fled to Germany.

The author, Ambrose Evans-Pritchard, who worked as The Sunday Telegraph correspondent in Washington until the summer and who now works for The Daily Telegraph, recounts a remarkable interview of his own with Strassmeir. They discuss an "informant". Strassmeir has denied that he was referring to himself during the conversation.

Mr Ambrose writes: " 'There comes a time in every botched operation when the informant has to speak out to save his skin, and that's now, Andreas'. "

" 'How can he?' Strassmeir shouted into the telephone. "What happens if it was a sting operation from the very beginning? What happens if it comes out that the plant was a provocateur?"

'A provocateur?'

'What happens if he talked and manipulated the others into it? What then? The country couldn't handle it. The relatives of the victims are going to go crazy. He's going to be held responsible for the murder of 168 people.'

'That is true.'

'Of course the informant can't come forward. He's scared shitless right now.'

'It sounds to me as if you've got a problem, Andreas.'

'Schiesse'.

Some 300 members of the victims' families are suing the government claiming that the bombing was a "government sting" designed to trap neo-Nazis but which went horribly wrong.

There is no doubt that McVeigh was guilty, says the author, but the whole truth has been concealed because none of the witnesses who saw McVeigh with accomplices was called to testify by the prosecution. That would have led back to Elohim City and the culpable incompetence of the FBI and ATF, the book argues.

These conclusions may gain credence even among the sceptical American press following comment yesterday by Robert Novak, a respected columnist, in the Washington Post. Dismissing previous smears of the author, Mr Novak writes, he "is no conspiracy theory lunatic (and) is known for accuracy, industry and courage".

The Secret Life of Bill Clinton also documents a cover-up in the death of Vince Foster, deputy White House counsel, officially ruled a suicide. The author has evidence of obstruction and systematic falsehood in the official version of events - prompting the lead investigator, Miquel Rodriguez, to resign.

Patrick Knowlton, a witness, refused to retract testimony that he saw a thuggish man standing guard at Fort Marcy Park shortly before Mr Foster's body was found.

The night before Mr Knowlton's second interrogation by the FBI, his car was vandalised. The author has tracked down the perpetrator: a freelance FBI agent with the highest category of security clearance. The book suggests that Mr Foster's suspicious death may be linked to his incriminating inside knowledge of alleged corruption in Mr Clinton's government in Arkansas.

Larry "L D" Brown, a former member of Governor Clinton's security detail, recounts a mission to Mexico allegedly to kill a man who knew the state government was winking at weapons smuggling to the Nicaraguan Contras.

The author writes: "Brown did not want to be on the wrong side of a house-cleaning operation by the CIA, so he accepted the mission."