

Ex-Federal Informant Back Before Grand Jury

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OKLAHOMA CITY - Former federal informant Carol Howe returned Tuesday for more testimony before the grand jury investigating allegations of a government cover-up in the Oklahoma City bombing.

Ms. Howe, a former Tulsa debutante, has said she told her handlers at the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms that she overheard Dennis Mahon, a Tulsa white supremacist, and German national Andreas Strassmeir discuss blowing up federal buildings in the months before the April 19, 1995, bombing. Neither man was ever named as a suspect.

Ms. Howe, who has been photographed in neo-Nazi clothing, arrived Tuesday wearing a neat gray dress. She refused to speak with reporters as she entered the Oklahoma County Jail, where the panel is meeting.

Her attorney, Clark Brewster, said Ms. Howe has also been subpoenaed to testify for the defense at Terry Nichols' trial. The defense in Timothy McVeigh's trial tried to call her, but the judge ruled her testimony irrelevant.

Ms. Howe testified before the grand jury for a full day on Oct. 8. Mr. Mahon, a leader of the White Aryan Resistance who runs a Dial-a-Racist hotline, denies any involvement in the bombing and says he was at his parents' farm in Illinois on the morning of the bombing. Mr. Strassmeir has also denied any involvement in the bombing that killed 168 people.

Mr. McVeigh tried to phone Mr. Strassmeir at Elohim City, a white separatist compound in eastern Oklahoma, a few days before the bombing. Mr. Strassmeir has said he knew Mr. McVeigh only from a brief meeting at a Tulsa gun show in 1993.

Ms. Howe was acquitted on federal conspiracy and bomb threat charges in an unrelated case this summer.

A government agent testified that Ms. Howe was dropped as an informant in March 1995 because of questions about her mental stability. The ATF and the FBI briefly reactivated her after the bombing, but dropped her again when she provided no useful information, the agent said.

The grand jury was empaneled June 30 after a petition drive mounted by men who believe federal prosecutors overlooked other conspirators besides Mr. McVeigh and Mr. Nichols. The grand jury backers also say they believe ATF agents had prior knowledge of the bombing that killed 168 people.

The ATF denies any prior knowledge, and prosecutors say they doubt a larger conspiracy.

Mr. McVeigh was convicted in June on federal murder and conspiracy charges and sentenced to die. Testimony began Monday in Mr. Nichols' trial on the same charges.