

McVeigh left apparent recruiting note on tower, witness says

DENVER (AP) — Five months before the Oklahoma City bombing, Timothy McVeigh left a note atop a utility tower in rural Arizona, apparently trying to recruit someone for his anti-government campaign, Terry Nichols' attorneys said Friday.

The attorneys introduced the letter — which both sides agreed was written by McVeigh — to bolster their argument that McVeigh and Nichols had a falling out early in 1995, when Nichols focused on starting his own gun show business and finding a home for his family.

Donald Pipins, a utility worker, told jurors he found the note inside two sealed envelopes more than 10 feet up the side of the tower in the desert near Kingman, Ariz., on Nov. 30, 1994.

"A man with nothing left to lose is a very dangerous man and his energy/anger can be focused on a common/righteous goal," McVeigh wrote.

Dashing through seven witnesses, the defense attorneys also pounded their theme that others were involved in the April 19, 1995, bombing in which 168 people died.

A bombing survivor testified that she encountered two men next to a car resembling McVeigh's getaway vehicle near the federal building after the blast, and thought it odd

when one man — whom she later identified as McVeigh — asked if a lot of people were killed.

Before recessing for the day Friday, U.S. District Judge Richard Matsch said the trial was proceeding ahead of schedule, but he could not say how much longer it would take. Jurors grinned, and one raised a clenched fist and mouthed the word, "Yesss."

In the first four days of its case, the defense has called 55 witnesses in an effort to convince jurors that others were involved in the plot; that the government is mistaken about when the bomb was built; and that Nichols was developing a gun-show business and taking care of his family, while McVeigh was distributing anti-government literature and

becoming increasingly paranoid.

Defense attorneys have said the note Pipins found was addressed to "SC," who has been identified as Steven Colbern, an Arizona man never publicly linked to the bombing. Lead attorney Michael Tigar has said McVeigh was trying to recruit Colbern.

In the note, McVeigh said he couldn't be certain of Colbern's motives, saying, "In short, I'm not looking for talkers. I'm looking for fighters."

In a postscript, he added, "If you are a fed, think twice about the Constitution you are supposedly enforcing."

In other testimony, Germaine Johnston, branch chief of the federal Housing and Urban Development agency, said she and her desk were

showered with ceiling tiles and other debris when the bomb went off.

Covered with pulverized concrete and wet from water spewing from broken pipes, Johnston left the building, encountering two men near a 1977 yellow Mercury Marquis.

As she approached, Johnston said, the taller man asked her what happened and she told him of the blast. Then, she said, the man asked, "A lot of people killed?" Johnston replied she didn't know.

"I thought he was going to ask me if he was going to help me or if I was OK..." she said. "It really surprised me that he just wanted to know how many people were killed."

