

WITNESS LINKS WASHINGTON SEPARATIST WITH MCVEIGH



The Columbian (Vancouver, WA)

January 16, 1998 | AP

SPOKANE (AP) - A white separatist awaiting trial for a string of crimes may have known the Oklahoma City bombing was being planned days before the blast, The Spokesman-Review reported today.

Chevie Kehoe, 24, showed up at a Spokane motel on April 19, 1995, about 45 minutes before the bomb went off, and wanted to watch CNN, the newspaper reported.

When a news bulletin reported the explosion, Kehoe was ecstatic and said "it was about time," the former manager of The Shadows Motel & RV Park told the newspaper, speaking on condition of anonymity. "Days before that, he had mentioned to me that there's going to be something happening on the 19th and it's going to wake people up," he said. An FBI agent said the agency was interested in the man's comments, but was unsure of his credibility. The former manager also claimed that Timothy McVeigh stayed at the motel with Kehoe a few months before the bombing. Sometime in late 1994 or early 1995, the man said, Kehoe approached him and asked if he could give a free room to a friend. There were vacancies that night, so he provided the room and didn't ask the man to sign the motel registry. "I was introduced to a gentleman named Tim, and I now believe he was Timothy McVeigh," the former manager told the newspaper, describing him as tall and slender with a military-style haircut. "I'm 75 percent certain it was him, McVeigh, but I could be wrong." McVeigh was sentenced to die after he was found guilty of murder and conspiracy in the bombing, which killed 168 people. Terry Nichols was convicted of conspiracy and involuntary manslaughter earlier this month, and is awaiting his sentence. The FBI has said its investigation pointed only to McVeigh and Nichols. But a grand jury in Oklahoma is investigating allegations of a government cover-up and a larger conspiracy in the bombing. The FBI and Justice Department have dismissed the claims, with Attorney General Janet Reno saying last week that she is

satisfied that "we have identified the people responsible." "We have no reason to believe what (the former Shadows manager) is saying is credible, but we're interested in what he has to say," said Burdena Pasenelli, special agent in charge of the FBI Seattle regional office. The former manager is a key prosecution witness against Kehoe and two other men indicted in Little Rock, Ark., last month on charges they planned to revolt against the U.S. government and create the Aryan Peoples Republic, where citizenship would be limited to certain white people. Kehoe and another man also were charged with killing Arkansas gun dealer William Mueller, his wife and 8-year-old stepdaughter in 1996. And Kehoe faces yet another trial in Ohio after a shootout with officers last year that grabbed headlines because it was captured on a police cruiser video machine. Federal agents first interviewed the motel manager in October 1996 when they learned that an arsenal of stolen firearms and survivalist supplies were stored at the motel, the Spokesman-Review reported. Agents said he didn't mention seeing McVeigh, though he told the newspaper he did mention it in passing. Agents re-interviewed the manager this week. Pasenelli wouldn't say what the FBI would do with the information. A timeline developed by the FBI on McVeigh's whereabouts in the months before the bombing shows there are some missing days. But the agency has "no confirmed information that Mr. McVeigh has ever been in eastern Washington or north Idaho," Pasenelli said.