

New lead in Oklahoma bombing

White separatist may have known about plans days before the blast.

Associated Press

SPOKANE, Wash.— The FBI said Friday it is investigating whether a white separatist awaiting trial for a string of crimes in Ohio and Arkansas may have known about the Oklahoma City bombing days beforehand.

Agents are trying to determine the credibility of a former Spokane motel manager, who said separatist Chevie Kehoe showed up at the motel on April 19, 1995, about 45 minutes before the bombing and said he wanted to watch CNN, FBI spokesman Ray Lauer said.

According to a story published Friday by The Spokesman Review, the manager said Kehoe became ecstatic when a news bulletin reported the blast, saying "it was about time."

"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," the manager told the newspaper on condition of anonymity.

Lauer said if Kehoe would be a co-conspirator if he knew about the bombing, helped plan it or gathered materials for it.

The manager also told authorities that Kehoe arranged to have a man stay at The Shadows Motel & RV Park a few months before the bombing — a man who closely resembled Timothy McVeigh.

"I was introduced to a gentleman named Tim, and I now believe he was Timothy McVeigh," the manager told the newspaper, describing the man as tall and slender with a military-style haircut.

"I'm 75 percent certain it was him, McVeigh, but I could be wrong."

Said Lauer: "It's a little premature to judge the credibility of these stories. We're certainly following through on it to try and learn anything we can that could corroborate his information."

FBI agents this week interviewed the man, whom Lauer wouldn't identify, and were trying to contact others who may be able to confirm his claim.

Dan Vogel, an FBI spokesman in Oklahoma City, declined to comment Friday on any links Kehoe may have to the case.

Jerry McHenry, a court-appointed lawyer representing Kehoe in the Ohio trial, said Friday his client had never told him of any association with McVeigh.

A grand jury in Oklahoma is looking into allegations of a government cover-up and a larger conspiracy in the bombing, which killed 168 people.

The FBI and Justice Department have dismissed those allegations and Attorney General Janet Reno said last week she was satisfied that "we have identified the people responsible."

McVeigh was sentenced to die after he was convicted of murder and conspiracy in the bombing.

Nichols, convicted of conspiracy and involuntary manslaughter in December, is awaiting his sentence.

The former motel manager is a key prosecution witness against Kehoe, 24, and two other men indicted in Little Rock, Ark., last month on racketeering charges.

They are accused of plotting a revolt

against the U.S. government and create the Aryan Peoples Republic, where citizenship would be limited to certain white people.

Kehoe and one of his co-defendants also are charged with murder in the 1996 deaths of Arkansas gun dealer William Mueller, his wife and 8-year-old stepdaughter.

Kehoe also faces trial in Ohio for a shootout with police officers.

Kehoe's younger brother, Cheyne Kehoe, was convicted this week of attempted murder, assault and carrying a concealed weapon in the videotaped shootout with two Wilmington, Ohio, police officers.

He has yet to be sentenced in the case.

The two brothers are from Colville, north of Spokane.

THE GADSDEN TIMES / SATURDAY, JANUARY 17, 1998 A3



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Low 35
Details A2