

Beyond McVeigh

What the Feds Won't Tell You About Oklahoma City

By James Ridgeway
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The FBI's admission last week that it has known since at least March about more than 3000 pages withheld in the Oklahoma City bombing case may force the reopening of the case. Attorneys for Terry Nichols have asked for a new trial. Lawyers for Timothy McVeigh, whose May 16 execution has been delayed for a month, are contemplating their next move. The FBI says it made a bureaucratic mistake, but its actions look to some like a cover-up, especially since the papers are said to contain various documents relating to the mysterious John Doe No. 2, who many suspect was involved in the attack that destroyed the Murrah Federal Building on April 19, 1995.

As it stands, the case just doesn't make sense. McVeigh's recent claim that he mixed the fertilizer bomb by himself is unbelievable. Various witnesses in Kansas and Oklahoma City saw other people around the legendary Ryder truck used in the blast. Several suspicious individuals met McVeigh in the weeks before the explosion. McVeigh suggests these were onetime, casual encounters, but clues suggest otherwise.

As wacky as their claims may at first seem, conspiracy theorists say the question of whether the government knew about the plot beforehand—or even played some role in it—cannot be ignored.

This is a list of certain—but by no means all—of the events that hint at a broader plot.

JOHN DOE NO. 2: The government theory was that McVeigh, using the name Robert Kling, rented a Ryder truck from Elliott's Body Shop in Junction City, Kansas, on Saturday April 15, 1995, at about 8:45 a.m. He paid \$281 and told Eldon Elliott he'd pick up the truck at 4 p.m. Monday.

When McVeigh returned, he was accompanied by a man Elliott described as white, between 5-7 and 5-8, wearing a white cap with blue stripes. He said Kling himself was a white male, 5-11 and 180 to 185 pounds.

Another employee, Tom Kessenger, told the FBI that Kling was accompanied by a second individual wearing a black T-shirt, jeans, and a baseball cap colored royal blue in the front and white in the back. The man also had a tattoo on his upper left arm. Portrayed in a police sketch, this person became known around the world as John Doe No. 2. Kessenger later changed his story and identified Kling

as 5-10, 175 to 185 pounds, with green or brown eyes and a rough complexion or acne.

Stephen Jones, McVeigh's attorney, pointed out that when McVeigh was booked into the Noble County jail, he was listed at 6-2 and 160 pounds, with blue eyes and a clear complexion.

JUNCTION CITY WITNESS: The government claims McVeigh placed a call for Chinese food at a restaurant in Junction City on April 15. Jeff Davis, who delivered the order to room 25 at the Dreamland Motel, said the man who took the food had "unkempt" hair and a regional accent. He told the FBI the person who accepted the delivery was not Timothy McVeigh.

The McVeigh defense pointed out that McVeigh wore his hair short, in a military style, and had no regional accent. There were no McVeigh fingerprints in room 25.

A SECOND TRUCK: Four witnesses said they saw a Ryder truck at the Dreamland, but on Sunday, April 16—a day before the government claimed McVeigh picked up a vehicle at Elliott's. This testimony gave rise to another theory that two trucks were involved in the plot.

OKLAHOMA CITY WITNESS: A young woman, subsequently trapped in the wreckage, said that moments before the blast she saw a Ryder truck park in front of the Murrah building and a slim, olive-skinned white man—with black, clean-cut hair and wearing a baseball cap, jeans, and a jacket—get out of the passenger side of the truck and walk away very fast, heading in a westward direction. Then came the explosion.

THE LEG: The lower part of a left leg was hauled out of the wreckage—the only body part never matched with a victim. One theory said it belonged to John Doe No. 2. The foot was in a combat boot, and there was some sort of military blousing strap attached to the shoe. At the trial, an expert witness for the defense suggested the leg belonged to the bomber.

THE BOMB: The government argued the explosive was built at Geary Lake near Herington, Kansas, overnight on April 18th. Speculation has always been that McVeigh and Nichols made the bomb. But experts have long pointed out it would be almost impossible for even two men to mix up a bomb of this magnitude in one night. Yet in a recent book called *The American Terrorist*, by Lou Michel and Dan Herbeck, McVeigh told the authors that he basically mixed the bomb himself.

CHARLES FARLEY: The Fort Riley civilian employee testified that when he drove down to Geary Lake to check out the fishing possibilities on April 18 he saw three other vehicles—including a truck piled with bags of what looked like fertilizer—and a group of men. According to the government's case this was the date and place of the bomb's construction.

ELOHIM CITY: McVeigh says he once considered using this far-right racist religious community in eastern Oklahoma as a hideout after the bombing. Records show he made one phone call there, on April 5, when he asked to speak to Andy Strassmeier, whom he'd met at knife and gun shows.

McVeigh insists the call was his only contact there, but in the new edition of *Others Unknown*, attorney Jones writes otherwise. In an interview just prior to a lie detector test, McVeigh said he sent a letter to Pastor Robert Millar "in mid March, talking about a small operation that he was thinking about putting together, which the two of them had discussed in the past and [he] wanted to know if there would be some type of underground railroad that Bob Millar could inform him of so that he might be able to carry out such operations."

At least one known resident of Elohim City had been a leader of a 1980s group called the Covenant, Sword, and Arm of the Lord, whose members planned to blow up the Murrah building with a missile. Those plans were aborted when the missile detonated in the hands of the man making it.

Richard Snell, a former CSA member who participated in the first plot, was executed in Arkansas on April 19, 1995. Pastor Millar, Snell's spiritual advisor, witnessed the execution and took his body back to Elohim City for burial.

ARYAN REPUBLICAN ARMY: Rumors have been flying about the possibility of McVeigh's involvement with the Midwest bank robbers calling themselves the Aryan Republican Army. Some army members had ties to the Aryan Nations and the Posse Comitatus. And it is known that they frequented Elohim City. Richard Guthrie, the leader of the Aryan Republican Army, hung himself in jail in 1996, shortly after he told the *Los Angeles Times* he was writing a book about his gang that would blow the lid off a wider conspiracy. In a sealed plea bargain, he promised to provide the government with information about groups "whose goal is the overthrow of the U.S. government or [to] engage in domestic terrorism."

Currently, other jailed members of the gang are said to have claimed that a certain "Tim" was in contact with their group.

CAROL HOWE: The former Tulsa socialite who became a neo-Nazi was recruited and taken to Elohim City by Dennis Mahon, a former Tulsa Klan leader. In fact, Howe was working undercover for the federal ATF. She claims to know about trips to Oklahoma City by Mahon and Strassmeier (a German national), and has said she traveled with both men to case the "Morrow" building there as a possible target.

LADY GODIVA: Dancers at this Tulsa strip joint said they saw a man on April 8, 1995, who looked like McVeigh and was joined by three other men. Their story gained credibility when the bar's owner found a surveillance tape of the women's dressing room that night. On the tape, the door bangs open and a stripper enters.

Stripper One: [*Leaning into the mirror, adjusting her costume*] "You know those three guys I'm sitting out there with? Well, one of them says he's looking for a girl to fool around with tonight. Are you interested?"

Stripper Two: "Well, OK, I'll figure out a way to scam them."

[*The tape becomes unintelligible for a few seconds.*]

Stripper One: " . . . one of them said, 'I'm a very smart man.' 'You are?' 'Yes, I am. And on April 19, 1995, you'll remember me for the rest of your life!' 'Oh really?' 'Yes, you will.' "

McVeigh claims he was a thousand miles away that night, staying at the Imperial Motel in Kingman, Arizona.

JENNIFER McVEIGH: According to one FBI affidavit unsealed by a Buffalo federal district court, two witnesses say that at a party on December 23, 1994, Jennifer talked of war and revolution. According to one person, Jennifer McVeigh said: "There's going to be a revolution, and you're either going to be with us or against us. I know I'm going to be ready. You'll see, in either April or May something big is going to happen with my brother. I don't know what it is, but it's going to be big."

DENNIS MAHON: He's just one of the people McVeigh might have met who has consistently been mentioned by journalists as a possible conspirator. One witness drew a sketch of John Doe No. 2 that looked like Mahon, minus dark glasses and mustache. "It drives you crazy," Mahon told *The Guardian* of London. "Thousands think I was involved. I've started to believe it myself. Maybe I was there. Maybe they brainwashed me and I forgot about it. Maybe I can get hypnotized and remember it. Everybody said I was there. Everybody said I drove the truck. They saw me.

"Maybe there's somebody out there who looks like me," he said. "I'm just about ready to turn myself in and tell them, 'OK, motherfuckers, I did it.' But I didn't."

Mahon claims he never met Tim McVeigh but did meet a man called Tim Tuttle, one of McVeigh's pseudonyms, at gun shows. Mahon went back and forth to Elohim City and parked a trailer there. He claims Tuttle slept in the trailer. In March 1997, Mahon told the *Voice*, "If we had a hundred men like him in this country we'd probably change things around." He added, "I don't agree with what he did particularly. My personal opinion is that that building should have been bombed early in the morning."

ANDREW STRASSMEIER: This former member of the German army, who had intelligence training, says he served for a time as security consultant at Elohim City to make money while in the U.S. He told reporters he met McVeigh once at a Tulsa gun show and denies any involvement. But a reporter for

the *Tennessean* quoted Larry and Cathy Wild, residents of northern Kansas, as remembering seeing and talking to a man they think was Strassmeier at a lake north of Herington one week before the bombing. Larry Wild, a retired high school coach, remembers saying to the man, "Your dialect is really different. Are you a soldier?"

"No," said the man.

Wild asked if he worked for the government, and said the man "kinda laughed."

Additional reporting: Rouven Gueissaz and Adam Gray