

Memos show McVeigh linked to supremacists

Bomber's lawyers didn't get some documents

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WASHINGTON — FBI investigators in the Oklahoma City bombing gathered evidence linking Timothy McVeigh to white supremacists who the government had been told before the bombing were threatening to attack government buildings, investigative memos show.

Several of the documents were not provided to the bomber's defense before he was convicted. And the FBI agent in charge of the investigation says he never received one teletype from his own headquarters that raised the possibility McVeigh was aided by other accomplices.

"They short-circuited the search for the truth," McVeigh's original attorney, Stephen Jones, said in an interview. "I don't doubt Tim's role in the conspiracy. But I think he clearly aggrandized his role, enlarged it, to cover for others who were involved."

McVeigh was executed in June, 2001.

Evidence includes hotel receipts, a speeding ticket, prisoner interviews, informant reports, and phone records that

suggest McVeigh had contact with a white supremacist compound in Oklahoma known as Elohim City and that members there were familiar with his plan.

"It is suspected that members of Elohim City are involved either directly or indirectly through conspiracy," federal agents wrote in one memo just days after McVeigh detonated a truck bomb April 19, 1995, outside the Alfred P. Murrah federal building in Oklahoma City and killed more than 160 people.



McVeigh: He was executed in June, 2001.

The documents also include a teletype from FBI headquarters in August, 1996, that reported McVeigh called Elohim City two weeks before his bombing, a call to a home where members of a violent Aryan Nation bank-robbery gang were present.

McVeigh made the call April 5, 1995, moments after calling the Ryder truck company where he rented the truck that carried his deadly bomb. The government had known from an informant weeks before McVeigh's call that members of Elohim City were threatening an attack, the documents show.

The FBI teletype revealed that the gang members present when McVeigh called were familiar with explosives and had made a videotape three months before McVeigh struck promising a "courthouse massacre."

The teletype also noted that two of the robbers left Elohim City on April 16 for a location in Kansas a few hours from where McVeigh was doing the final assembly of his bomb.

"I did not see that teletype," retired agent Dan Defenbaugh, who supervised the Oklahoma City investigation, said.

Mr. Defenbaugh said that while he didn't consider the teletype a "smoking gun" that would have changed the outcome of the probe, his investigative team "shouldn't have been cut out."

Mr. Defenbaugh said he also was surprised to learn that prosecutors in 1996 made and then withdrew a plea bargain offer to one of the imprisoned bank robbers, Kevin Peter Langan, who claimed he had information about the Oklahoma City bombing.

"The Justice Department came to us through the assistant U.S. attorney and said, 'We believe your client knows about Oklahoma City and we want to talk to him. We want to work out a deal,'" Langan's lawyer, Kevin Durkin, said.

Langan made several demands the government wasn't willing to meet, and prosecutors dropped the request, Mr. Durkin said.

Mr. Durkin said his client has information about the Oklahoma City bombing, and had planned to tell prosecutors that he could disprove the April 19 alibis for two of the bank robbers in the FBI teletype.

FBI officials acknowledged some of the documents were not provided to McVeigh's defense team before his trial.

But they said that after more than 1 million investigative hours that generated more than 1 billion documents and checked 43,000 tips, FBI agents found no concrete evidence of McVeigh conspirators beyond Terry Nichols, who is in federal prison.

The documents show the FBI suspected McVeigh participated in a December, 1994, Ohio bank robbery with the Aryan Nation robbers, but lab analyses that attempted to match him to a videotape from the bank's security camera were inconclusive.

FBI officials had several reasons to suspect a connection:

- McVeigh's sister told them her brother gave her money from a bank robbery and asked her to launder it in December, 1994. Also, they had evidence McVeigh was in Ohio at the time, FBI officials said.

- The leader of the robbery gang, Mark Thomas, initially told agents after his arrest that he suspected some of his members were involved in McVeigh's plot. He later recanted.

- A girlfriend of one of the bank robbers told the FBI her boyfriend had told her beforehand of a plan to bomb a federal building, and that he left days before the bombing for a trip to Elohim City.

FBI agents stopped pursuing the suspects all denied assisting the Oklahoma bomber. Most

weren't given lie detector tests, officials said.

The robbers, however, weren't the only evidence that led the FBI to suspect a link between McVeigh and Elohim City.

Agents collected a receipt showing McVeigh stayed at a hotel near the compound on Sept. 13, 1994, the day that, a federal grand jury concluded, he hatched his plot to blow up the Murrah Building. The FBI also obtained a speeding ticket McVeigh received just 12 miles from the compound.

Within a few days of the bombing, FBI officials received intelligence suggesting members of Elohim City had information relevant to the investigation.

The FBI's scene commander for the Oklahoma City investigation, now retired, said he believes his agency may not have thoroughly investigated possible ties between McVeigh and Elohim City.

"I think you have too many coincidences here that raise questions about whether other people are involved," retired agent Danny Coulson said.