

Police search for Oklahoma bombing video

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OKLAHOMA CITY - The possibility that a video exists showing the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building led to a search of a home in Virginia, but the man whose residence was searched said no such video was found.

No such video has ever been seen publicly and it is not clear whether one exists. Depending on what was on such a video, it could conceivably be used as evidence in bombing conspirator Terry Nichols' trial on state murder charges, set to begin March 1.

The search of John Culbertson's home in Centreville, Va., took place Friday. The search was first reported by the McCurtain Daily Gazette.

Culbertson is a Washington-based consultant who once advised members of Congress on the Waco fire and Oklahoma City bombing investigations. He is a former aide to former Rep. James Traficant, an Ohio Democrat who was sent to prison for bribery, racketeering and tax evasion.

Culbertson said in a telephone interview Monday that authorities did not find the video they were seeking, but he declined to comment further until he finished meeting with an attorney. He didn't return subsequent telephone calls.

An affidavit in support of the search warrant was filed by Oklahoma City police inspector Mark Easley.

Easley has been assisting the Oklahoma County district attorney's office in its prosecution of Nichols, who faces 161 first-degree murder charges. Nichols already has been convicted of federal charges in the April 19, 1995, blast.

The affidavit said Nichols' attorneys had advised prosecutors that Culbertson might have a video of the explosion.

In the affidavit, Easley said Dallas attorney Thomas W. Mills Jr. saw the video on Culbertson's computer on Aug. 26, 1998. Culbertson allegedly told Mills the images came from a Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives agent. Mills said the video included images showing the building before the bombing, then with a "small glow" at its base, then with a "ball of fire rising from the building," according to the affidavit.

Easley said in the affidavit that he spoke to Culbertson by telephone before the search, and Culbertson said he showed such a video to Mills but that he had subsequently turned this material over to the House Judiciary Committee. Culbertson told Easley he couldn't say whether he still had a copy of the video.

Police in Virginia referred questions to the Oklahoma City Police Department, which declined to comment on the search. Prosecutors have consistently refused to comment on the case, citing a judge's gag order.