

# Racist robbers may have aided Oklahoma bomber

Investigators: Evidence linking Aryan group to Tim McVeigh strong enough to reopen case.

**By John Solomon**  
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WASHINGTON — FBI agents destroyed evidence and failed to share other information that raised the possibility that a gang of white supremacist bank robbers may have assisted Timothy McVeigh during the Oklahoma City bombing, according to documents never introduced at McVeigh's trial.

Both the FBI supervisor who ran the Oklahoma City investigation and the veteran agent who was in command at the bombing scene say the new evidence, detailed in documents obtained by The Associated Press, is serious enough to warrant reopening the inquiry nine years later.

The evidence, never shared with Oklahoma City investigators or defense lawyers, includes documents showing the Aryan Republican Army bank robbers possessed explosive blasting caps similar to those McVeigh stole and a driver's license possibly stolen during the bombing plot.

"If the evidence is still there, then it should be checked out," said Dan Defenbaugh, the now-retired FBI chief of the McVeigh investigation who reviewed the documents.

The agents said there could be plausible explanations for each piece of evidence — blasting caps are plentiful and the bank robbers were experts in identification fraud — but those questions need to be answered.

The investigative documents obtained by AP also shed new light on evidence the Justice Department did not introduce at McVeigh's 1997 trial, including that McVeigh may have sought to recruit additional help around the time he called a white supremacist compound in Oklahoma where several of the bank robbers stayed.

For instance, an FBI headquarters teletype stated McVeigh called the compound on "a day that he was believed to have been attempting to recruit a second conspirator to assist in the OKBOMB attack."

The April 19, 1995, bombing

killed more than 160 people and McVeigh was put to death for it in 2001. His co-defendant, Terry Nichols, will stand trial in Oklahoma next week on state charges.

Peter Langan, one member of the robbery gang, told the AP he plans to testify at Nichols' trial and that federal prosecutors several years ago offered and then withdrew a plea deal for information he had about the Oklahoma City bombing.

The gang "had some liability problems as it related to Oklahoma City," Langan alleged in an interview from federal prison, where he is serving life sentences for a robbery spree involving nearly two dozen Midwest banks in the 1990s.

Among those robberies was the July 7, 1994 robbery of Mercantile Bank in Springfield. Men wearing rubber masks left a fake bomb at the bank in that incident.

Langan said at least three fellow gang members were in Oklahoma around the time of the bombing and one later told him that they had become involved.

FBI and Justice Department officials declined to comment, citing the upcoming trial.