

FBI Probes McVeigh Omaha Connection Was Oklahoma City bomber involved in robbery spree?

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The FBI will examine files in three cities, including Omaha, to determine if Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh was connected to a group involved in bank robberies during the 1990s.

The Associated Press reported last week that FBI agents investigating the white supremacist Aryan Republican Army collected witness statements, blasting caps, and a driver's license that raised questions about whether the bank robbery gang might have assisted McVeigh's plot. The FBI is also looking at files in Philadelphia and Cleveland, where agents helped solve robberies linked to the gang. The FBI's mission, in orders given Friday, is to determine if the years-old whispers that McVeigh had more accomplices can be corroborated or disproved from a small body of documents that apparently never reached the original Oklahoma City investigation. A trail of hotel and car sale receipts, surveillance videos, and interviews with convicted felons awaits the agents.

FBI officials in Omaha on Saturday were not immediately available to comment on the city's connection to the investigations, said Amy Goering at the bureau's Omaha office. McVeigh was convicted in the 1995 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City which killed 168 people and injured hundreds more. He was executed in 2001.

The review will be conducted in the shadows of a related event, the Oklahoma state murder trial of McVeigh conspirator Terry Nichols, which begins Monday and may also shine light on the question of other accomplices. Nichols faces the death penalty if convicted. Any evidence of additional, unpunished conspirators could mitigate his fate.

There is the unanswered question of who robbed Arkansas gun dealer Roger Moore, a crime the government argued raised the money for McVeigh's bomb. Moore said the men who robbed him did not resemble Nichols or McVeigh. The bank robbery investigation turned up a tantalizing clue. The robbers had in their possession an Arkansas driver's license in the name of Robert Miller, the alias used by Moore in his dealings with McVeigh. The new inquiry will try to determine if the license is connected to Moore.

Some key pieces of evidence are gone. A bank surveillance video FBI agents once suspected might show McVeigh participating in a robbery with the Aryan gang was inexplicably destroyed in 1999. So too were some explosive blasting caps, two Christmas packages, and a duffel bag found in the possession of the robbers that match the contents seen in the trunk of McVeigh's car weeks before the bombing. The FBI never determined what McVeigh did with hundreds of blasting caps he stole before the Oklahoma bombing. The FBI has pictures of the six caps found in the bank robbers'

possession that might help determine if they are linked to McVeigh. Agents also interviewed witnesses who stated the robbers' caps originated with two gang members who were in Oklahoma just before the bombing, staying at a white supremacist compound that McVeigh called at least once.

None of the documents obtained by the AP proves the robbers or anyone else was involved with McVeigh. At most, they show the same FBI miscommunications seen in the September 11th attacks plagued the earlier Oklahoma City case and allowed a handful of tantalizing clues to fall through cracks.

If the FBI chooses, it also could interview witnesses. The bank robbery investigation secured statements from at least two bank robbers and one ex-girlfriend that gang members had bragged they were involved with McVeigh's plot. One of those gang members, Peter Langan, is promising to tell what he knows if given the chance to testify at Nichols' trial. FBI agents could give Langan a grant of immunity from future prosecution and force him to tell what he knows. The same could be done with other gang members, some of whom already have denied their involvement.