

FBI orders review of Oklahoma City bombing investigation

WASHINGTON (AP) — The FBI ordered a review of some aspects of the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing investigation Friday, reopening the question of whether Timothy McVeigh may have had more accomplices, government officials said.

Reacting to an Associated Press story earlier this week, the FBI ordered agents to determine why some documents did not properly reach the bureau's Oklahoma City task force during the original investigation or get turned over to McVeigh's lawyers before he was executed in 2001, officials said.

The review will also try to determine whether FBI agents in a separate investigation of white supremacist bank robbers may have failed to alert the Oklahoma City investigation of a possible link between the robbers and McVeigh, and allowed some of that evidence to be destroyed.

AP reported Wednesday that documents never introduced at McVeigh's trial showed 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 McVeigh.

The evidence includes documents showing the Aryan Republican Army bank robbers possessed explosive blasting caps similar to those McVeigh stole and a driver's license with the name of a central player who was robbed in the Oklahoma City plot. The caps were destroyed.

McVeigh's former attorney and the retired head of the McVeigh investigation applauded

Oklahoma City bombing revisited

The FBI on Friday ordered a formal review of some aspects of the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing investigation, reopening the question of whether Timothy McVeigh may have had more accomplices in the worst domestic terrorist attack in U.S. history.

April 19, 1995 — Bomb rips through the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. McVeigh arrested on firearms charge after routine traffic stop.

April 21 — Authorities arrest McVeigh in connection with bombing. Terry Nichols, eventually convicted as co-conspirator, surrenders.

May 4 — Bombing death count stands at 168.

Aug. 11 — Federal grand jury indicts McVeigh and Nichols on murder and conspiracy charges, but finds they acted with "others unknown." Michael Fortier pleads guilty to firearms and other charges as part of plea bargain.

June 2, 1997 — Jury convicts McVeigh on all 11 murder and conspiracy counts against him.

Aug. 14 — McVeigh formally sentenced to death.

June 4, 1998 — Nichols sentenced to life in prison without parole.

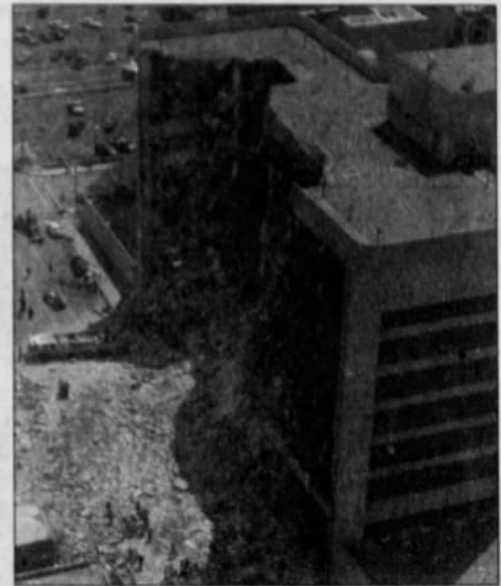
May 10, 2001 — Justice Department begins turning over thousands of FBI investigation documents to McVeigh's attorneys.

June 11 — McVeigh executed in Indiana prison.

Feb. 11, 2003 — Information surfaced that the FBI were so worried that white supremacists in Oklahoma might launch an attack on April 19, 1995 to avenge the execution of one of their leaders, that they flew a reformed neo-Nazi to Washington in late March and debriefed him about a 1980s plot to blow up the Murrah building.

Feb. 12 — Just weeks before McVeigh's attack, federal agents planned to raid an Oklahoma compound after learning that white supremacists were discussing a possible attack on government officials. The FBI stopped the raid, unaware of government threats. Evidence later surfaced that McVeigh called the compound just 14 days before his bombing.

April 30 — Ten days before McVeigh was executed, lawyers for FBI lab employees sent an urgent letter to Attorney General John Ashcroft alleging that a key prosecution witness



in the trial might have given false testimony. The allegations, however, were never turned over to McVeigh or the trial court, even though they surfaced as the judge was considering whether to delay the execution.

May 4 — Months before McVeigh's trial, a FBI scientist told investigators that his lab colleagues had performed shoddy work in the case, then abruptly retracted several of the allegations before appearing as a prosecution witness. The information

was never provided to McVeigh's defense.

Feb. 24, 2004 — FBI investigating a string of bank robberies gathered evidence that members of a neo-Nazi gang might have assisted McVeigh or possessed evidence from the Oklahoma City conspiracy, but much of what they learned wasn't shared with their colleagues in the McVeigh case.

Feb. 27 — FBI orders formal review of Oklahoma City bombing investigation.

SOURCE: Associated Press

AP

ed Friday's development. "It was the right thing to do. The FBI has to put the integrity back in the 'i' of the FBI," retired agent Dan Defenbaugh said.

McVeigh attorney, Stephen Jones, said the key will be how aggressively the FBI pursues the review. "The question is how serious an investigation it will be or are they going through the motions and is this a face-saving way

to close the book on this," he said.

The documents don't prove additional accomplices were involved — blasting caps are plentiful and the gang was expert in document fraud. But Defenbaugh said his team never got the chance to investigate the evidence and he called earlier this week for the probe to be reopened.

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 that could carry the death penalty.

Nichols' attorneys asked Thursday for the trial to be delayed in light of the AP story, but the judge refused.