

Kingman back under McVeigh's shadow

Subpoenas revive stigma of bombing

By Dennis Wagner
The Arizona Republic

KINGMAN — A month before the bombing, Oklahoma City terrorist Timothy McVeigh plotted in the obscurity of this windblown city in the high Arizona desert.

After the explosion, Kingman, a pit stop on Route 66, was suddenly cast as a haven for militia nuts, meth freaks and motorhomes.

At least that was the image projected in 1995 when journalists from



Jack Kurtz/The Arizona Republic

"I will not go, sir," declares Walter "Mac" McCarty, 80, of Kingman.

around the world swarmed to write about the city that spawned what was then America's most deadly domestic-terrorism attack.

Today, Kingman returns to the

news.

Terry Nichols, a McVeigh co-conspirator, has already been convicted for the murder of eight government agents in the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City.

Now he is being tried in Oklahoma City in the murder of the 161 other people who died that day.

Among those subpoenaed to testify about what they know about the bombers are 13 Kingman-area residents. Some do not want to go. A Mohave County Superior Court judge will conduct hearings this morning to decide if they must.

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Nine years after the bombing, the ugly portrait of Kingman has faded. Most folks around Kingman long ago wiped away the memory and the infamy.

Guys such as Leslie Marshall, 47, whose great-grandpa settled in the nearby hills before Arizona was a state, never paid much mind anyway.

"That's old news," Marshall says. "Sure, it comes over the news sometime, but it's no big deal."

McVeigh, a Gulf War veteran, moved to Kingman in 1993 to be with his Army buddy, Michael Fortier. Another ex-soldier, Terry Nichols, paid a visit or two, as well. They hashed out plans, with McVeigh piling soup cans on the floor of Fortier's home to demonstrate how bombs would be arranged to destroy the Murrah building.

An elderly woman who lives in the trailer now says that thought is creepy, but she is otherwise unfazed. She wasn't in Kingman on April 19, 1995, when FBI agents invaded and the media churned out stories. Kingman wasn't to blame anyway, and she would just as soon not have her name in a story about it.

Painful reminders

That seems to be the pervasive attitude. Time has healed psychic wounds. Still, no one likes to be reminded.

The Mohave Museum's "Chronicle of Historical Events" in Kingman lists only one item for 1995: the opening of a golf course.

Folks in Kingman say they were collateral victims of the bombing, suffering guilt by association. The *Sydney Morning Herald* in Australia published a classic smear, describing Kingman as "a gritty little town of mobile homes and junk-strewn yards."

"I hate saying we are known for Tim McVeigh," says Rosanne Rosenberg, the museum library director. "One bad thing should not define a town. ...Kingman's a great town. I love the desert, the mountains, the open spaces."

Carol Anderson, who was mayor in 1995, says the city borne of miners and cowboys has a rich, tough history. "Mr. McVeigh wasn't here very

Links to Kingman

Kingman's connection to the Oklahoma City bombing:

Early 1993: Timothy McVeigh quits security-guard job in New York and moves to Kingman, living initially with former Army buddy Michael Fortier.
May to July 1993: McVeigh works as part-time security guard at State's Security in Kingman. In June, McVeigh moves to Canyon West trailer park south of Kingman and rents trailer No. 11 for \$250 a month. He leaves for Michigan in September.

February 1994: McVeigh returns to Kingman and gets job paying \$5 an hour at True Value Hardware, where he loads customers' goods.

April 1994: McVeigh quits working at True Value, his last-known job, and moves back in with Fortier.

Late May 1994: Kingman-area resident Walter "Mac" McCarty has secret meetings with McVeigh in Kingman park. McCarty later says he believes he was being "felt out" about participating in unknown action against the federal government.

May-June 1994: McVeigh and Fortier travel to Prescott to inquire about how to set up a militia in Kingman area, but nothing comes of it.

July 1994: McVeigh is best man at Fortier's wedding in Las Vegas.

Oct. 4, 1994: After

long."

In fact, the few residents who knew McVeigh don't talk much about the brooding guy who wore a gun and worked odd jobs. Most people there never met him.

Vanessa Griffey and her husband, Don, chose to settle in Kingman last year. They bought the City Cafe without knowing or caring about any connection between Kingman and the bombing.

Vanessa, 46, speaks of her adopted home as a beloved sister, saying, "I think she was a rowdy little cowgirl at one time. But now she's all grown up, and she's beautiful. I just love her."



cross-country travels and a storage-locker theft of explosives in Marion, Kan., McVeigh and another former Army buddy, Terry Nichols, rent a storage unit in Kingman to hide stolen dynamite and blasting caps.
Oct. 7, 1994: McVeigh tells Fortier of the theft of explosives and details how he will build a truck bomb.
Nov. 6, 1994: McVeigh returns to Kingman after the theft of \$60,000 worth of weapons, ammunition, cash, military gear, jewels, gold and silver from a Hot Springs, Ark., gun dealer. The theft was used to finance the bombing.

November 1994: First of three visits by McVeigh to Kingman print shop to make copies of right-wing publications.

Early 1995: Fortier says

Still, for those caught in the vortex nine years ago, this month's trial in Oklahoma has sparked a flashback.

Defense attorneys want jurors to believe their client, Nichols, is a fall guy who backed out of the plot.

They have issued subpoenas for the 13 Kingman-area denizens in an effort to prove McVeigh was working with others or at least cast doubt on Nichols' role.

At least one of those witnesses, Walter "Mac" McCarty, is resisting. McCarty is an outspoken ex-Marine with a gun on his hip, a dog that's half pit bull and a sign on his isolated prop-

erty: "Nothing inside this fence is worth you dying for." Because he loves talking about the bombing case, McCarty has emerged as an unofficial spokesman. "I liked McVeigh. I admired him until ..." he says, not finishing the sentence.

McVeigh is hanging around his house all of the time reading *Soldier of Fortune* magazine and is "generally lazy."
Early spring 1995: McVeigh pressures Fortier to join the bomb scheme, authorities say. When Fortier refuses, McVeigh gets angry, moves out of Fortier's trailer and says he's leaving Kingman to get Nichols' help. Fortier says he doesn't speak to McVeigh again.

Feb. 13-17, 1995: McVeigh stays at Hilltop Motel in Kingman.

March 1995: McVeigh rents the movie *Blown Away*, about a psychotic terrorist who targets Boston's bomb-removal squad in numerous explosions, from the Hastings video-rental store in Kingman.

March 31-April 12, 1995: McVeigh stays at the Imperial Motel in Kingman, rarely leaving his room. He keeps his door locked and blinds drawn and makes no phone calls. He uses a military ID to get a discount rate of \$19.95 a night and pays for seven nights, then five more.

April 13, 1995: McVeigh leaves Kingman to build a bomb in the back of a Ryder truck in Herington, Kan., where Nichols lives.

April 19, 1995: An explosion kills 168 people at the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City.

This morning, Judge Steven Conn of Mohave County Superior Court will conduct hearings on that very subject, leading to a final chapter in the case.

McVeigh was convicted of murder and executed in June 2001. Fortier, a bona fide son of Kingman, was convicted of failing to do anything to prevent the bombing. He became a government witness and is serving 12 years in prison as part of a plea agreement.

Nichols, 49, is serving a federal life term under for the deaths of eight government agents in the federal building. Now, Oklahoma is prosecuting him in the murder of the 161 other victims and seeking to have him pay the same price that McVeigh paid.

Speculation continues

Despite nine years of investigations and trials, the bombing case is still dogged by conspiracy theorists. The speculation is fueled by contradictions in the government's case, divergent threats of evidence and questions about a mystery accomplice known as John Doe II.

Immediately after the 1995 attack, federal officials put out bulletins about McVeigh's alleged help. Descriptions of the man changed dramatically over several days before the FBI retracted claims of a phantom figure.

In Nichols' federal trial seven years ago and in the ongoing state case, defense lawyers tried casting at least two Kingman-area men as John Doe II. Fortier, who admits he knew of the plot but denies any role, was one.

The other, Steven Colbern, has been described as a chemist who advertised a "desire to blow up federal buildings."

McVeigh purportedly posted a recruitment message to Colbern on a Kingman utility pole, saying, "I'm not looking for talkers, I'm looking for FIGHTERS."

Some of the Kingman witnesses have been subpoenaed to bolster those claims.

For example, lineman Donald Pipins, 57, has been called merely because he discovered the note to Colbern.

"I get a free trip to Oklahoma. It's just something you got to do," Pipins says, adding that the case has never had any real effect on him.