

Nichols jurors hear of John Doe No. 2

By The Associated Press

Attorneys for bombing conspirator Terry Nichols unveiled the cornerstone of their defense at his murder trial Thursday in McAlester, Okla. -- that others helped Timothy McVeigh plan the Oklahoma City bombing.

Sketches bearing the image of John Doe No. 2, a muscular, dark-skinned suspect who doesn't resemble Nichols, were flashed across television monitors as defense witnesses testified that someone other than Nichols was with McVeigh in the days prior to the bombing that killed 168 people.

Defense attorneys questioned the first of about 200 witnesses they plan to call, after Judge Steven Taylor replaced a juror who suffered a heart attack before arriving in court Thursday.

The excused juror, Robert Dale McCoy, is expected to make a full recovery, Taylor said. He was replaced by a female alternate, changing the makeup of Nichols' jury to six men and six women.

Prosecutors, who are seeking the death penalty against Nichols, rested their case on Friday after questioning 151 witnesses and introducing more than 1,000 pieces of evidence over 29 days.

Defense attorneys allege McVeigh received substantial help from others in planning the April 19, 1995, bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building and that Nichols was set up to take the blame.

Lea McGown, owner of the Dreamland Motel in Junction City, Kan., said she rented McVeigh a room April 14-18. While McVeigh was registered there, a man walked into the lobby and asked directions to McVeigh's room, McGown said.

McGown said she did not remember the man's face but said he wore a distinctive blue and white baseball cap, also described by others as worn by John Doe No. 2.

McGown also said she heard McVeigh talking with one or two other men in his room one night. She said she thought one of the men had telephoned McVeigh's room earlier.

"I heard Mr. McVeigh's voice and another velvety voice and a third voice in the background," McGown said. On cross examination, she said the third voice could have come from a television set.

She said she remembered seeing McVeigh with a large Ryder rental truck on the Sunday before the bombing, one day before prosecutors allege he leased it at a body shop using an alias.

McGown said she never saw McVeigh with anyone else and could not identify the sketch of John Doe No. 2. However, she did identify two phone calls that were made from the room to Nichols' home in Herington, Kan.

The defense's first witness was Raymond Rozycki, the FBI artist who drew the sketch depicting John Doe No. 2. Rozycki said the sketch was based on a description by Tom Kessinger, who worked at Elliott's Body Shop.

Rozycki said he drew two suspect sketches, the first resembling McVeigh and a second sketch of a heavy, well-built man with brown eyes and hair who eyewitnesses said was with McVeigh at the leasing agency.

Kessinger said the man wore a black T-shirt and had a tattoo on his left arm. He also wore a baseball cap with white and blue zigzag patterns.

Hilda Lopez, a former housekeeper at the Dreamland Motel, said that on April 17, two days before the bombing, she saw a man wearing a cap with a similar pattern walk toward a Ryder truck that was parked in the motel parking lot.

She said the man was well-built, had short black hair and had a dark complexion that made him appear Hispanic.

A former Chinese food deliveryman, John Jeffrey Davis, said he delivered an order to a man who was neither McVeigh nor Nichols to McVeigh's room at the Dreamland Motel on April 15.

Davis identified a composite sketch of the man drawn by an artist in April 1996. It does not match FBI sketches of McVeigh or John Doe No. 2.

Prosecutor Suzanne Lister hammered Davis about his memory of the man. On cross examination, Davis said he could not recall the features of other customers that day.

Nichols, 49, is serving a life prison sentence following his 1997 convictions on federal involuntary manslaughter and conspiracy charges in the deaths of eight law enforcement officers in the bombing.

In Oklahoma, Nichols is charged with 161 counts of first-degree murder for the deaths of the other 160 victims and one victim's fetus.

McVeigh was convicted on federal murder charges and executed in 2001.