

Lawyer claims FBI informer linked to McVeigh bombing

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A Salt Lake City lawyer says an FBI informant who was an explosives expert might have trained accomplices of Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh at a white supremacist compound.

Attorney Jesse Trentadue says two teletypes sent by the FBI's director show that an informer had infiltrated a paramilitary training compound in Oklahoma known as Elohim City and was there in April 1995 when one of the bombing suspects allegedly called looking for co-conspirators.

The name of the informant and caller are blacked out, but Trentadue suspects they are Andreas Strassmeir, a German national who he says was the weapons and explosives instructor at the compound, and McVeigh, who allegedly was trying to recruit accomplices two weeks before the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building that killed 168 people. The attorney says he believes Strassmeir was working either for the FBI or for the Southern Poverty Law Center, an Alabama-based civil rights group, which relayed the information to the agency.

If his suspicion about the informant's identity is correct, "then not only does it appear that FBI defendants knew about and fail[ed] to prevent the attack upon the Murrah Building, but FBI defendants may also have been responsible for training McVeigh and the others who planned and carried out the attack," Trentadue says in a document filed Monday at U.S. District Court in Salt Lake City.

The accusation was made in the lawyer's lawsuit that alleges the FBI is violating the federal Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) by refusing to turn over documents connected to the 1995 death of his brother in an Oklahoma prison.

This latest allegation by Trentadue follows one he made last month that the FBI probably knew in advance about the bombing but did nothing to stop the attack.

The FBI and the Department of Justice, which represents the agency in the lawsuit, do not comment on pending litigation. The FBI has responded in court papers that it has followed FOIA procedures and asked U.S. District Judge Dale Kimball to dismiss the suit.

But Trentadue says the judge should reject the request and require the agency to conduct another document search. In an affidavit attached to Monday's filing, retired veteran FBI agent Emanuel Johnson Jr. says he believes the teletypes are genuine and easily retrievable from agency files.

Trentadue does not say how he obtained the teletypes, which appear to have been sent to bombing investigators. He is seeking documents on the probe because he believes it holds clues to his brother's death.

Kenneth Trentadue, 44, who had served time for bank robbery, was arrested on a parole violation and had been placed in a federal prison in Oklahoma City when guards found him dead on Aug. 21, 1995, hanging from a noose made of torn bed sheets. His family insists he was killed and contend correctional officers destroyed evidence.

Authorities have denied the allegations and several investigations ruled the death a suicide.

Jesse Trentadue believes that at one time, the FBI was investigating whether a gang that robbed banks to fund attacks on the government was connected to the bombing and suspected his brother of being one of the robbers. The lawyer thinks Kenneth was killed "when things got out of hand" during an interrogation.

McVeigh was executed in 2001. Media reports say Strassmeir returned to Germany soon after the bombing.

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