

Oklahoma City Bomber Nichols Says a 3rd Man Took Part in Plot

Los Angeles Times | ARTICLE COLLECTIONS

May 04, 2005 | Richard A. Serrano | Times Staff Writer

WASHINGTON — After a decade of silence, Terry L. Nichols, who was convicted in the Oklahoma City bombings, has accused a third man of being an accomplice who provided some of the explosives used to kill 168 people at the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building 10 years ago.

Nichols, in a letter written from his cell at the U.S. government's Supermax prison in Colorado, said Arkansas gun collector Roger Moore donated so-called binary explosives, made up of two components, to bomber Timothy J. McVeigh that were used in Oklahoma City, as well as additional bomb components that recently were found in Nichols' former home in Kansas.

The claim that a third man -- in addition to McVeigh and Nichols -- was involved in the plot comes as a California congressman has begun pressing for answers to lingering questions about what, until Sept. 11, 2001, had been the worst terrorist attack in the United States.

Rep. Dana Rohrabacher (R-Huntington Beach), chairman of the investigative arm of the House Committee on International Relations, has been collecting new evidence in the bombing and said he would announce soon whether formal hearings would be opened into the April 19, 1995, tragedy.

He believes Nichols' knowledge about other potential conspirators is central to his investigation, especially since the components found in March in a crawl space below Nichols' former home remained undetected for nearly a decade.

The congressman said it was important to determine whether others were involved beyond Nichols and McVeigh, two Army pals who became antigovernment zealots.

"That this mass murder of Americans was accomplished by two disgruntled veterans acting alone seems to be the conclusion reached by those in authority," Rohrabacher said recently on the House floor, referring to the FBI's investigation of the bombing.

"However," Rohrabacher said, "there are some unsettling loose ends and unanswered questions."

Nichols has been convicted twice -- in federal and Oklahoma state courts -- and is serving multiple life sentences without the possibility of parole.

For 10 years, he has kept his silence. His recent revelations are considered particularly significant because they came in letters he sent to a woman named Kathy Sanders, who lost two grandchildren in the bombing.

Having turned 50, Nichols said he wanted to begin speaking out about the bombing because the 10-year anniversary last month honoring the victims had passed and he "felt the record should be set straight."

Repeated attempts to find Moore, an itinerant gun dealer who has lived in Arkansas and Florida, for comment on Nichols' allegations were unsuccessful Tuesday.

The FBI, in the early stages of its investigation, took a hard look at Moore because of his antigovernment views and

his close relationship with McVeigh.

McVeigh often stayed at Moore's home in Royal, Ark., and the two had exchanged letters sharing their views about the government.

In past interviews, Moore has steadfastly denied any involvement in the bombing. He maintained that in the period before the explosion, he was robbed at gunpoint by a masked man who stole dozens of firearms and other weapons worth about \$60,000 from his home in Royal.

The FBI and government prosecutors later proved that McVeigh sold the firearms to raise money to purchase bomb ingredients, and prosecutors long asserted that it was Nichols who had robbed Moore.

In past interviews with The Times, Moore said he took a lie-detector test that convinced the FBI he was not involved in the bombing.

"Everything they asked was 100% right," said Moore, who was 60 at the time of the bombing. "They told me that."

Nichols' letter to Sanders was dated April 18, the day before the 10-year anniversary. In it he said the government knew that others were involved but would not prosecute them, and he wanted to work with Rohrabacher and Congress "to help expose the gov't coverup in my case and thus reveal the truth in the OKC bombing."

He said ongoing FBI tests of the components found at his house in Herington, Kan., would support his allegation that the material came from Moore and his friend, Karen Anderson.

"That case of nitromethane came directly from Roger Moore's Royal, Arkansas, home, and his prints should be found on that box and/or tubes, and Karen Anderson's prints may be there as well," Nichols wrote.

Anderson also could not be found Tuesday.

"Moore provided McVeigh with the binary explosives known as KINE-STIK (aka-KINE-PAK) which consist of 2 components -- ground ammonium nitrate and nitromethane -- and is approx. the size of a stick of dynamite."

Nichols added in the letter: "Moore testified in open court that he did not know what KINE-STIK nor KINE-PAK was. He was clearly lying!

"Kinestik that McVeigh got from Moore was used in the OKC bombing!

The two components of the binary explosives -- ground ammonium nitrate and nitromethane -- are chemicals that explode when combined and ignited.

An FBI spokesman in Kansas City, Mo., Jeff Lanza, said Tuesday that 300 blasting caps found in the Nichols home had been positively traced to a nearby Kansas quarry from where agents believed Nichols and McVeigh stole some of the bomb components.

Lanza said other material, which he declined to identify, found at the home was being examined for fingerprints and other evidence at the FBI crime laboratory in Quantico, Va.

"I'm not going to deny that they were there," Lanza said of the Kinestik and Kinepak described by Nichols. "But we just haven't made any conclusive determination" about where those explosives came from.

Despite her personal loss in the Oklahoma City bombing, Sanders has befriended Nichols over the years, while conducting her own investigation into the bombing. She said the letter he wrote her showed that he was eager to talk now that his trials were over, the anniversary had passed and Congress was considering hearings on Capitol Hill.

"He was a quiet, introverted little fellow before the Oklahoma City bombing," she said. "He's been sitting in his cell

now for 10 years alone. He's very timid; he's not good in social circles.

"But he is starting to want to tell everything."

McVeigh was considered the bombing mastermind. Nichols helped him assemble the bomb in Kansas but stayed home while McVeigh drove the rental truck to Oklahoma City.

McVeigh was executed in June 2001, and any secrets he might have had died with him. That makes Nichols all the more interesting to Rohrabacher and Sanders.

She recently wrote a book, "After Oklahoma City," and met with the congressman to share some of what she had turned up in her quest to find others besides Nichols and McVeigh who might be responsible.

In other letters from Nichols, which she shared with The Times, he described his solitary life amid unending conspiracy theories such as whether a gang of Midwestern bank robbers were involved, whether there was a German or Middle Eastern connection to the bombing, and whether a figure known as John Doe No. 2 accompanied McVeigh to the truck rental store.

In March 2000, Nichols wrote Sanders that God had changed his outlook on life.

"I wish I would have known these truths myself years ago, for it would have prevented me from making numerous mistakes in my life," he wrote. "But that's the past and no one can change it."

In a letter dated April 6 this year, he denied that he had hidden the explosives at his home so they could be used for another bombing at the Murrah site on the 10-year anniversary. He said another inmate at his prison told authorities that story to try to win a reduced sentence.

"The devil is twisting the truth," Nichols wrote.

He added: "Pray that the truth be revealed."

In his April 18 letter alleging the connection between Moore and the explosives, Nichols included this line: "There's much more I would like to say.... Please pray that the truth finally comes out."

And in a final letter dated April 24, which Sanders received Monday night, he urged her to seek clearance from prison officials to meet with him. "I would be more than willing to discuss with you my knowledge of the OKC bombing," he said.

Sanders said Rohrabacher had made inquiries about meeting with Nichols. If he convenes formal hearings, the congressman could subpoena Nichols to appear in Washington as a star witness.

In his House floor speech April 19, the congressman suggested that Nichols held many of the answers for those who doubted he and McVeigh had acted alone. The congressman also wants to review government documents and 23 surveillance tapes of activity around the Murrah site on the morning of the bombing.

The tapes have not been released to the public, even though the trials are over and the FBI says its investigation is closed.

"This is a free society," Rohrabacher said. "And if the public is to have faith in their government, we cannot keep secrets like this."