

Fortier Looks Forward to Rebuilding Life McVeigh accomplice rehabilitated, "has a lot to offer"

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Free from federal custody for the first time in more than 10 years, Michael Fortier looks forward to spending time with his family and building a new life, his attorney said.

Fortier, the government's star witness in the Oklahoma City bombing trials, was freed on Friday from an undisclosed federal prison after serving about 85 percent of a 12-year sentence he received for not telling authorities in advance about the bomb plot that killed 168 people.

Fortier's attorney, Michael McGuire of Tulsa, said his client looked forward to reuniting with his wife, Lori, and their two children.

"This has built a fire in him like nothing I ever saw," said McGuire, who said he spoke to Fortier by telephone on Tuesday. "He's got a lot to offer. He's going to be successful. He's a very intelligent man."

McGuire would not reveal the exact time or location of Fortier's release. He also would not say who met Fortier, originally from Kingman, Ariz., or where he would live.

Authorities have said Fortier, 37, was released from prison early because of good behavior and will be subject to three years of supervised probation.

The Federal Bureau of Prisons has consistently refused to release any information about Fortier, prompting speculation that he may be entering into a witness protection program.

Fortier, 37, was placed in federal custody in August 1995 after accepting a plea deal in which he agreed to testify in the trials of bombing coconspirators Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols.

McVeigh was convicted on federal murder charges and executed on June 11, 2001. Nichols was convicted of state and federal bombing charges and is serving multiple life prison sentences.

Fortier's release was greeted with mixed reaction by prosecutors and members of bombing victims' families. The April 19, 1995, bombing of the Oklahoma City federal building remains the most deadly act of domestic terrorism in U.S. history.

"He may have outlived his prison sentence, but he will never outlive his responsibility," said Oklahoma County District Attorney Wes Lane, who prosecuted Nichols on state murder charges in 2004.

At state and federal bombing trials, Fortier testified he received stolen weapons that were sold to finance the bomb plot, shared money from their sale with McVeigh, handled blasting caps and other explosives and had the same anti-government literature that McVeigh gave Nichols.

Fortier also accompanied McVeigh on a trip where they cased the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building four months before it was bombed.

Lori Fortier, who was granted immunity and never served prison time, also testified at McVeigh's trial that she laminated a fake driver's license for McVeigh with the name of one of the many aliases he used, Robert Kling.

Jannie Coverdale, who lost two grandsons in the blast, said Fortier should have been given a life sentence. She said his role in the blast was as significant as that of Nichols.

"Michael Fortier being out of prison? There's no way I can forget that. He helped murder my grandsons," she said.