

# **Feds failed to follow bombing evidence**

## **Information in Utah's FBI lawsuit points to possible co-conspirators in Oklahoma City blast**

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For years, Salt Lake City attorney Jesse Trentadue has maintained his brother was killed in prison months after the Oklahoma City bombing by interrogators who mistakenly believed he was connected to the attack.

Now, a new congressional report says federal authorities failed to investigate evidence suggesting Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols had assistance plotting the bombing - and some of the information pointing to co-conspirators came out of Trentadue's lawsuits against the FBI.

And it adds fuel to the mystery of Kenneth Trentadue's supposed suicide in 1995 at the Federal Transfer Center in Oklahoma City.

Trentadue believes FBI records hold clues to his brother's death and has fought the agency in court for those documents. Some that have been ordered released say investigators got tips about a possible link between the April 19, 1995, bombing and a group of white supremacist bank robbers with links to a training camp in Elohim City, Okla.

That information is included in the report by the House International Relations investigative subcommittee.

Trentadue said Sunday that two findings in the report stand out, including the lack of cooperation by the FBI in the congressional body's investigation.

The second is that McVeigh and Nichols may have been aided by others.

"It's pretty clear, whether Islamic terrorists or homegrown neo-Nazis, there were other people involved," Trentadue said, adding that the subcommittee's probe "will help reveal the truth about the Oklahoma City bombing, which I now know is linked to my brother's death."

Kenneth Trentadue, who had served time for bank robbery, was arrested near San Diego in June 1995, two months after the bombing that killed 168 people. He was sent to the transfer center in Oklahoma City for an alleged parole violation. On Aug. 21, guards found Trentadue's blood-soaked body in his cell hanging from a noose made of torn bedsheets. Prison officials say the 44-year-old inmate committed suicide.

According to Jesse Trentadue, his brother bore a strong resemblance to Richard Lee Guthrie, a bank robber and alleged accomplice of McVeigh. He maintains that authorities mistakenly thought his brother was Guthrie - a member of the Midwest Bank Robbery Gang, an arm of the Aryan Republican Army that stole from financial institutions to fund attacks on government buildings - and killed him during an interrogation that got out of hand.

Guthrie was arrested on bank robbery charges in 1996 and eventually struck a plea bargain with prosecutors. In fall 1996, he claimed he would soon be revealing information that "would blow the lid off the Oklahoma City bombing case," according to the report. The next day, he was found dead, hanging in his cell in Kentucky, purportedly a suicide.

"This suspicious 'suicide' mirrored the similar death of [Kenneth] Trentadue, another prisoner, who may have been tangentially and incorrectly linked to the Oklahoma City bombing," the subcommittee report says.

Trentadue has filed three lawsuits in U.S. District Court in Salt Lake City alleging, among other claims, that the FBI has violated the Freedom of Information Act by failing to turn over requested documents on the Oklahoma City bombing. In one of the suits, Judge Dale Kimball ordered the agency to produce some of the disputed records on information about a possible white supremacist link to the bombing.

The House International Relations investigative subcommittee will release the findings of its two-year review as early as Wednesday, declaring there is no conclusive evidence of a foreign connection to the attack but far too many unanswered questions remain.

The subcommittee's report will conclude there is no doubt McVeigh and Nichols were the main perpetrators, and it discloses for the first time that Nichols confirmed to House investigators he participated in the robbery of an Arkansas gun dealer that provided the proceeds for the attack.

There have long been questions about that robbery because the FBI concluded McVeigh was in another state at the time it occurred.

The report also sharply criticizes the FBI for failing to be curious enough to pursue credible information that foreign or U.S. citizens may have had contact with Nichols or McVeigh and could have assisted their plot.

The subcommittee saved its sharpest words for the Justice Department, saying officials there exhibited a mindset of thwarting congressional oversight and did not assist the investigation fully.

FBI spokesman Richard Kolko said Sunday, "The Oklahoma City bombing case was the largest case the FBI worked on before 9/11. Agents at virtually every office, domestically and overseas, covered thousands of leads. Every bit of information was investigated and reviewed. The FBI worked tirelessly to cover all of the leads and conducted a thorough and complete investigation."

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\* THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

contributed to this report.

\* Information that McVeigh called a German citizen living at a white supremacist compound in Oklahoma two weeks before the bombing and that two witnesses saw the men together before the bombing.

\* Witness accounts that another man was seen with McVeigh around the time of the bombing. The FBI originally looked for another suspect it named John Doe 2, even providing a sketch, but abruptly dropped that line of inquiry. The subcommittee concludes that decision was a mistake.

\* Information from a former TV reporter concerning an Iraqi national who was in Oklahoma around the time of the bombing.

Source: The Associated Press