

NEWS DIGEST

your quick guide to news from around the world

Suspect's sister takes stand in bombing trial

1 DENVER — Timothy McVeigh left a computer message warning that federal agents would "swing in the wind one day" and wrote his sister just weeks before the Oklahoma bombing that "something big is going to happen," she testified Tuesday.

Jennifer McVeigh told jurors she followed her brother's instructions to burn his letter, which promised the event "in the month of the bull," an astrological reference to either April or May.

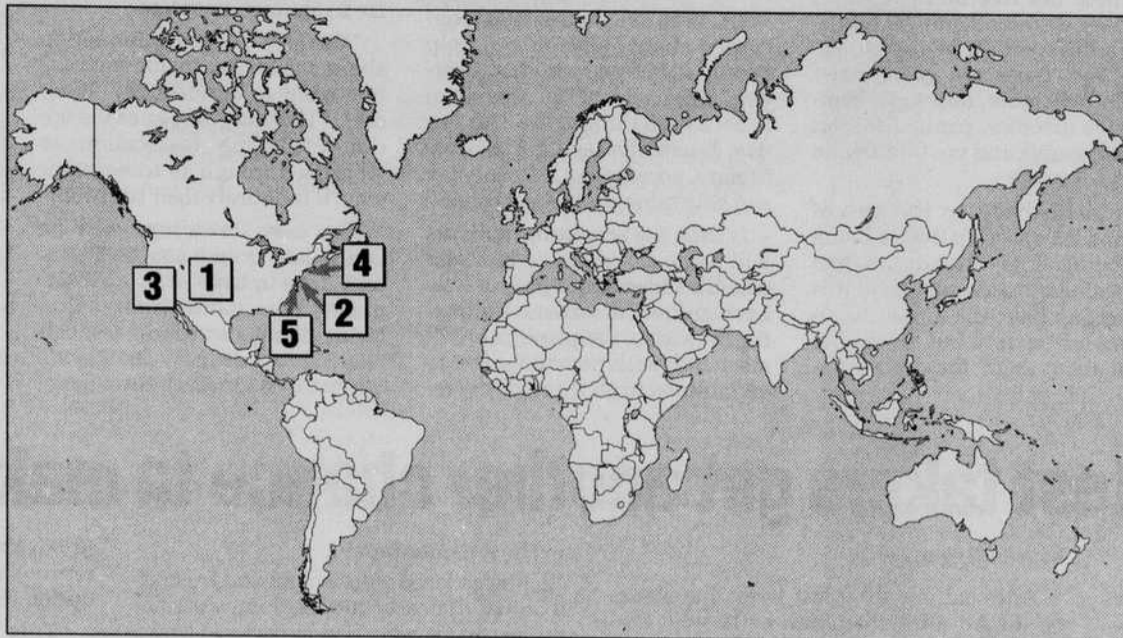
Testifying under immunity for 2 1/2 hours over two days, Ms. McVeigh generally spoke in calm, even tones — sometimes sounding practiced.

But the demeanor of the 23-year-old college student changed dramatically when she spoke about her intense eight-day interrogation by FBI agents, who told her she could face the death penalty if she didn't cooperate. Her voice cracked and she began crying into a white tissue.

Under cross-examination, she said she was questioned in a room plastered with poster-sized pictures of herself and her brother, along with a listing of the possible charges against them.

Ms. McVeigh did eventually give the FBI statements and agree to testify against her brother at his trial only if she could not be prosecuted.

She said five months before the blast he left a file on her computer at her home in upstate New York titled "ATFREED," an apparent reference to the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, which played a central role in the deadly 1993 raid on the Branch Davidian compound near Waco, Texas.



Army sgt. sentenced for raping six trainees

2 ABERDEEN PROVING GROUND, Md. — An Army drill sergeant who faced life in prison for raping six trainees was sentenced Tuesday to 25 years in a case that led to investigations of sexual misconduct at U.S. military bases worldwide.

Staff Sgt. Delmar G. Simpson stood calmly to hear his sentence. His attorney, Frank J. Spinner, said he will appeal the sentence in the case, which has rekindled debate about whether the Army should continue to mix men and women in basic training.

Simpson's defense team blamed the verdict on false claims by the female trainees — saying the sex was consensual — and undue influence by top Army commanders. They also suggested racial bias played a role.

Intel investigates flaw in Pentium II

3 SAN JOSE, Calif. — Intel Corp., on the eve of launching its Pentium II microprocessor, said today it is investigating a reported math flaw in the chip.

The company, the world's largest maker of computer chips, said it expected to figure out the problem by the end of the week and promised to make that information public. Intel also said that if an error does exist it will come up with a solution as soon as possible.

The bug, reported Monday on the Web site of Intel critic Robert Collins, is less serious than the infamous Pentium bug and will not delay the company's planned rollout of the chip in New York on Wednesday. The microprocessor initially will appear in powerful personal computers for businesses.

Computer, Kasparov draw in third game

4 NEW YORK — It was advance no one after Game 3 of world chess champion Garry Kasparov's match against IBM's Deep Blue computer, with man and machine playing to a draw Tuesday. The stalemate left their series tied at one win each.

Kasparov offered the draw after his 48th move. Deep Blue immediately accepted, bringing the 4 1/2-hour match to a close.

The 34-year-old Russian defeated Deep Blue in Saturday's opening game of the series, but the computer came back to win Sunday's second game.

On Tuesday, Kasparov opened the game in the same cautious manner as he began the previous two games, playing a slow-developing series of moves in which his offensive intentions were not immediately clear.

FTC investigates CD price fixing claims

5 WASHINGTON — Major recording companies are being investigated over whether their marketing practices amount to illegally manipulating the prices of CDs.

The Federal Trade Commission notified recording companies last month it was opening a preliminary inquiry into their giving retailers advertising assistance in exchange for agreeing to a minimum price for compact discs, lawyers confirmed.

The industry — dominated by the six giants Sony, Time-Warner, MCA, Polygram, Bertelsmann and EMI Music — was caught off guard by the notification from the FTC, which had concluded a similar price-fixing investigation six months ago without taking action.

The federal investigations come as the recording industry is already battling flat sales.

"It's pretty soft," said Jill Krutick, an entertainment analyst at the Wall Street brokerage Smith Barney. "While there are pockets of strength, the overall market has been under a lot of pressure."

Among the factors, she said, is a bloated retail market, the end of the rush to convert from traditional records and tapes to CDs and the increasing focus on rap music, which has a narrower appeal than pop and rock.

At issue are what are known as minimum advertised price (MAP) programs. Music producers typically pay for some of the advertising of their products by retailers. In return they require that stores that accept the ad supplement charge no less than a minimum price for CDs.

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