

## **The search for victims nears end/FBI frees 2 drifters in blast investigation**

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OKLAHOMA CITY -- The lengthy, dogged hunt could end today for victims of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building bombing, but not for their killers.

After 15 days of intense, almost nonstop effort by teams sifting the teetering rubble, remains of 143 victims were recovered. Another 28 are believed still missing, said Ray Blakeney, operations director for the Oklahoma medical examiner's office.

"We hope to be through by tomorrow (Thursday) evening," Assistant Fire Chief Jon Hansen said Wednesday. The death toll of 171 makes the April 19 truck bombing the worst act of domestic terrorism in U.S. history.

As recovery teams searched gingerly through the last piles of rubble in the nine-story building Wednesday, they discovered the body of one of four children still on the missing list. At least 16 children were killed in the bombing.

The FBI, which has mounted a massive dragnet for suspects, returned to its search for "John Doe No. 2," an unidentified man who has been the subject of three well-publicized composite drawings and consequently, scores of possible sightings across the country.

Early Wednesday, authorities released their latest catch, two drifters who had holed up in a Missouri motel after visits to Oklahoma around the time of the blast.

Gary Allen Land and Robert Jacks were arrested Tuesday by the FBI in a dawn raid at a Carthage, Mo., motel, but were released 18 hours later after questioning.

Land, 36, who initially was described as resembling John Doe No. 2 and Jacks, 61, had been subjects of a nationwide hunt. A federal courthouse in Springfield, Mo., was kept open past 10 p.m. Tuesday for a possible hearing involving the two, but it never occurred.

The FBI released them shortly after midnight and the two men retrieved their white Thunderbird automobile at a storage yard where it had been taken after searches by bomb experts.

The two men said they had been victims of coincidence.

"We never done anything," Jacks told the Washington Post. "The FBI did its job. They picked us up. They thought possibly we knew something about the

bombing, that we were involved in it. They found out we didn't know anything about it, we weren't involved in it. And that's it, you know. Move on."

Land said the FBI gave them polygraph tests and they "passed with flying colors."

The two drew FBI attention when agents discovered they had registered at motels in many of the same cities and at the same times as Timothy McVeigh, the only suspect charged in the bombing.

Land and Jacks drove back to their motel before departing about 8 a.m., motel owner Wanda Jackson said. Jackson said the men were headed for Sacramento, Calif.

Several news reports Wednesday said the pair were ordered to appear in two weeks before the Oklahoma City grand jury investigating the bombing, although authorities confirmed they had no evidence connecting the two to the blast.

Investigators once thought that one of the bombers was in the rental truck used to deliver the bomb when it exploded, but now have rejected the theory. Medical examiners dubbed that person on the missing list as "Bomb Doe," Blakeney said.

As recovery work winds down in Oklahoma City, officials are arranging a visit to the building for members of the victims' families. Families already have been warned that some of the missing may never be found.

"The families will be able to go to the building just as soon as we're all through and it's safe for them to be there," said Hansen. "We all want to bring this tragedy to a close as soon as we can.

"We are using the hydraulic arm to assist us right now because we are in that area where it's just too dangerous for firefighters," Hansen said.

"We're going to keep going until we have searched all the debris we can, either by human means or mechanical means."

Many Oklahoma City residents, including many victims' families, are lobbying to clear the downtown property and turn it into a memorial.

Mayor Ron Norick said Wednesday he has taken a stand on the issue and is uncertain whether the federal government would turn loose the property.

"I'm having conversations now with Washington to decide on that site," Norick said.

Norick said a memorial to the victims will be erected somewhere.

Before the families visit the building, Oklahoma City police and FBI are expected to spend at least a day completing investigations at the crime scene, said Police Chief Sam Gonzales.

In all, the bombing damaged 312 buildings, said Public Works Director Paul Brum.

"We have about 25 buildings added to that number with structural damage and we have 10 buildings that actually collapsed," Brum said.

A few businesses in the 16-square-block damage area reopened this week, some operating without windows and some doing business in boarded-up buildings.

Norick said he hopes the resumption of business in the bomb area is a sign of some sort of return to normalcy in his town.

"The resolve is to get back to getting our city going again, economically and emotionally," said Norick. "I think everybody's still pretty emotionally distraught about it but they are starting to pull together very well.

"It's still very difficult every day to look at the paper and see another 10 or 15 funerals that are happening," he said.

Only one rescuer, nurse Rebecca Anderson, who was hit by falling rubble, died during the search for victims. As a sad postscript, the man to whom her heart was donated died Wednesday. Billy Wilcoxson, 54, of Duncan, Okla., died at University Hospital, 10 days after receiving the heart