

## **New Mystery Emerges from Oklahoma City Blast Site/Severed Leg with Foot in Combat Boot Found Deep in Rubble**

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OKLAHOMA CITY - A new mystery surfaced in the Oklahoma City bombing just days before formal charges were to be lodged, when the state medical examiner disclosed Monday that a severed leg and foot clad in a combat boot had been found deep in the rubble

The brief announcement, more than two months after the authorities said all victims were accounted for, came after the lawyer for Timothy McVeigh, the prime suspect in the bombing which killed 167 people, said he would ask prosecutors to explore information that a severed leg had been found that could not be matched to a body. The leg was found amid rubble near the center of the blast.

The lawyer, Stephen Jones, speculated that the leg and foot may have belonged to "the real bomber," who could have been blown apart in the explosion.

The finding raising the possibility of there being another participant in the bombing came as the deadline neared for federal prosecutors to bring indictments for the bombing against McVeigh and another army veteran, Terry Nichols.

A third member of the same army unit from Fort Riley, Kan., Michael Fortier, is also likely to be indicted, although he has been negotiating for leniency in exchange for his testimony and may receive lesser charges.

Fortier's wife, Lori, was brought to the federal courthouse in Oklahoma City on Monday for a 15-minute meeting with a judge in which she was granted immunity in exchange for her testimony before the grand jury. The grant of immunity for Lori Fortier was a key element in the deal that Fortier was attempting to strike with the federal prosecutors.

But the existence of an unknown body could cast the case in a new light. One possibility is that the leg belonged to the second man some witnesses reported seeing with McVeigh in the period just before the bombing but who investigators have never been able to identify. Thus far, despite a huge search for a "John Doe II," federal investigators have not identified any other participants.

The medical examiner's office, in a statement issued Monday, said that it was continuing to analyze unidentified human tissue recovered from the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, among which "is a traumatically amputated left thigh and lower leg recovered on May 30, 1995."

"This leg was clothed in a black military type boot, two socks, and an olive drab blousing strap," the statement continued, adding:

"Anthropological analysis of this specimen reveals the individual to be light skinned, dark haired, probably less than 30 years of age, male (75 percent probability), and having an estimated height of 66 plus or minus three inches. This leg has not been matched to any other known victims or survivors," the statement said.

The operations director of the medical examiner's office, Ray Blackeney, said that the severed leg had been found after the last three identified bodies were removed from the building, an operation that had been delayed because dangerous rubble had to be removed from above their location near the center of the blast for fear of collapse.

At the time of the recovery of the three bodies, Blackeney had dismissed the possibility that a bomber was killed in the blast, saying: "As far as I'm concerned, he's not there. We have found the people where we thought we would find them. We didn't find anybody we didn't think was there."

But the location where the leg was found, further down in the rubble near the center of the blast, would be consistent with someone in or near the exploding truck. Further, the medical examiner's office said that the leg was the largest identifiable body part, suggesting that the rest of the individual had disintegrated from the force of a nearby explosion.

Asked in a telephone conversation why the medical examiner's office had not made the existence of the severed leg public before, Blackeney replied; "Why should we?"

"I knew about it," he said. "We all knew about it here at the medical examiner's."

He said that the medical examiner's technicians had been working with the FBI using DNA and other tests of the severed leg and other pieces of tissue in hopes of establishing identifications.

"This has come out a little bit premature," Blackeney said. "This is the last piece of the puzzle and I hope at some point to offer an explanation."

Caption: Mug: Stephen Jones