

## **ATF chief: 2 Could Pull Off Bombing**

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WASHINGTON - The director of the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms said Monday that two men could have pulled off the Oklahoma City bombing, but he did not rule out future suspects.

ATF Director John Magaw, after a speech at the National Press Club, also said he suspects that Oklahoma City was targeted because of the vulnerability of the federal building and its proximity to the bombers' home base.

The Aug. 10 indictment of bombing suspects Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols accuses them of conspiring "with others unknown" to blow up the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building. The April 19 blast killed 169 people.

Mr. McVeigh and Mr. Nichols have pleaded not guilty.

Mr. Magaw said it was possible that two people could have planned and executed the nation's worst terrorist bombing, triggered by a fuel-and-fertilizer bomb loaded in a Ryder rental truck.

"That bomb is very simple to build and very basic to build," Mr. Magaw said.

The Oklahoma City grand jury also indicted a friend of Mr. McVeigh's, Michael Fortier, on charges of knowing about the bomb plot and failing to report it. Mr. Fortier has denied that he helped plan the attack, and he is expected to be the government's key witness.

Other federal officials declined to comment on the possibility of other suspects.

Mr. Magaw said he thinks the proximity of Oklahoma City to Kansas, where Mr. Nichols lives and authorities say they think the bomb was built, made it an inviting target. He also cited the exposed nature of the federal building.

Attorneys for Mr. Nichols cite telephone records that show he was not in Oklahoma City at the time of the blast. Those representing Mr. McVeigh have said the government is ignoring evidence of a larger bombing conspiracy, perhaps including international elements.

Federal officials say anti-government hatred fueled the bombing plot, including anger over the ATF's actions in the Branch Davidian siege near Waco.

Mr. Magaw also said he did not think the ATF was specifically targeted in the Oklahoma City attack. He noted that the agency's office was in a far corner of the building, away from ground zero.

"I think this was obviously the attack of a madman," Mr. Magaw said.

Mr. Magaw also had harsh words for FBI criticism of the ATF's attempt to arrest Branch Davidian leader David Koresh. The arrest attempt in 1993 near Waco ended in a firefight that killed four ATF agents. That began a 51-day standoff, concluding with an FBI tank-and-tear gas assault on the religious sect's compound and a fire that killed more than 80 people.

"I believe that had we been left in charge of the Waco incident, we would not have burned that building, if you're asking me that question," he said.

FBI officials declined to comment on Mr. Magaw's remarks. Investigations determined that the Branch Davidians started the fire from within their compound.