

# **Bombing Cover-Up Fears Called Off Base - U.S. Attorney Says So in Letters to Victims**

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OKLAHOMA CITY - Accusations by a dismissed grand juror and state lawmaker of a government cover-up in the bombing case are unfounded, U.S. Attorney Patrick Ryan says in a letter to victims of the blast.

"To suggest any of us would conceal or fail to investigate the identity of others involved in the killing of 169 innocent people is appalling," Mr. Ryan wrote in a letter mailed this week to more than 700 people.

Grand juror Hoppy Heidelberg was thrown off the panel last week after going public with complaints that prosecutors had not presented enough evidence about John Doe No. 2, a mysterious suspect depicted in FBI sketches released after the April 19 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building.

State Rep. Charles Key, R-Oklahoma City, has called for a state investigation to determine whether federal officials had prior knowledge of the blast or otherwise acted improperly. Authorities have denied his allegations.

"The clear message of this grand juror and Mr. Key is that the FBI and the federal prosecutors are failing to investigate the presence or identity of John Doe No. 2. These charges are unfounded," Mr. Ryan wrote in the letter.

Former Army buddies Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols could face the death penalty if convicted of federal murder and conspiracy charges. Their trial is set to begin May 17. Their indictment accuses the two of plotting the bombing with "others unknown."

"The United States has never maintained, or even suggested, that no other person or persons were involved with McVeigh and Nichols in the commission of these crimes," Mr. Ryan wrote.

Federal authorities have said that an innocent Army private resembled the sketches of John Doe No. 2, but the drawings were never withdrawn.

Mr. Ryan said, "The question of involvement of others is the subject of intensive investigation by federal investigators and prosecutors who are totally devoted and committed to identifying and prosecution all persons involved in the planning or commission of these crimes."

Mr. Ryan's letter apologized to the victims for not responding publicly to the allegations from Mr. Heidelberg and Mr. Key, which he said have received "undue attention" because of the notoriety of the bombing.

"We would welcome the opportunity to publicly present evidence and facts supporting the investigative effort of the FBI, the grand jury and the prosecutors from our office, but we are prohibited from discussing with you or the media the evidence heard by the grand jury and the direction and details of the investigation."

Also on Wednesday, U.S. District Judge Wayne Alley ordered the federal Bureau of Prisons to give the prosecution records and tapes of personal phone calls Mr. McVeigh and Mr. Nichols have made while in custody.

The order also directs the prosecution to give copies of the records and tapes to defense attorneys.

Judge Alley also gave defense lawyers until Nov. 21 to file motions seeking to move the trial. The judge has set the trial for Lawton, about 90 miles southwest of Oklahoma City.

Defense lawyers have said Mr. McVeigh and Mr. Nichols cannot receive a fair trial in Oklahoma.