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Leg From Bomb Rubble Said to Be Buried Victim's

February 24, 1996 | From Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — The leg found clad in a military boot in the rubble of the Oklahoma City bombing belongs to a previously identified victim, meaning the death toll may have to be lowered by one, the medical examiner reported Friday.

The FBI used DNA and footprints to match the leg to 21-year-old Airman Lakesha Levy, said Dr. Fred Jordan, the state medical examiner. That means that she was buried with the wrong left leg.

The discovery of the severed leg after the bombed-out federal building was demolished had led defense lawyers to speculate that it may have belonged to "the real bomber" in the April 19 attack.

Now, Jordan's admission that his office erred in its identification of some remains is likely to give lawyers for Timothy J. McVeigh and Terry L. Nichols ammunition against the prosecution's case.

McVeigh's lawyer, Stephen Jones, said the government's forensic evidence "appears to be moving in different directions like a weather vane in an Oklahoma stormy spring."

Jordan said his office staff apparently made three mistakes in identifying Levy's remains, including burying the wrong leg with her.

Also, the medical examiner's report erroneously said that the wrong leg was still attached to the body by skin, and that Levy was found with a combat boot on her left foot. Jordan said he believes that the boot was actually on her right leg, which was still attached.

The leg was discovered in the rubble of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building on May 30, more than a month after Levy's body was found. Authorities did not publicly acknowledge the extra leg's existence until Aug. 7.

Initially, authorities said the leg belonged to a white man around 30 years old. Three weeks later, citing more sophisticated tests, they said it belonged to a black woman between 16 and 30.

Those tests also showed that the leg did not match the victims with missing legs, and the death count was raised by one.

Jordan hopes to exhume Levy's body in a few days for tests on the left leg buried with her. Then Jordan hopes to match that leg to one of the eight other victims who were found without all or part of their left legs. The death count without an extra victim linked to the leg would be 168.