

SPECIAL REPORT:
OKLAHOMA CITY UPDATE

Standing by His Story

by William F. Jasper

Shortly after the deadly explosion rocked Oklahoma City on April 19, 1995, reports surfaced of seismograms from two separate seismic stations which appeared to offer scientific proof that the devastated Alfred P. Murrah Building had been the victim of not one, but two or more bombs. The two seismograms were recorded at the Omniplex Science Museum in Oklahoma City four miles north of the Murrah Building and the Oklahoma Geological Survey (OGS) station near the University of Oklahoma in Norman, 16 miles south of the blast site. Both seismograms showed two separate wave trains that appeared to be the result of two separate explosions. Reputable seismologists believed then, and still believe today, that this seismic evidence supports a multiple-bomb hypothesis. These scientists, however, have also been careful to acknowledge that the many complexities and ambiguities associated with the seismic signals render the seismograms less than conclusive and also allow an interpretation which supports the single-bomb hypothesis.

Politicizing the Evidence

Unfortunately, this important evidence -- which should have been examined and rationally debated by the scientific community for the possible contribution it could make toward solving a terrible crime -- was quickly politicized. To judge from the media reports and statements of government officials over the past two years, this politicization has been solely the work of "anti-government" zealots, militia groups, and wild "conspiracy theorists." And there have indeed been irresponsible or malevolent souls who have seized upon the seismograms and exaggerated the conclusivity of the evidence to "prove" that agents of the federal government blew up the building. However, far more serious and numerous than the reckless statements of a few newsletter writers and Internet jabberers have been the recurring cycle of errors, misinformation, obfuscation, and defamation dispensed by the major media and federal officials concerning this issue. Federal prosecutors and other officials have repeatedly and blatantly misstated the facts regarding the seismic evidence, violated the accepted canons of scientific research and publication, grossly misrepresented the scientific consensus, and impugned the integrity of reputable scientists whose views have not rigidly conformed to the "official" line.

With the approach of the trial date for bombing suspect Timothy McVeigh, a concerted campaign appeared to be underway by federal officials and complicit

news organizations to dispose of the seismic evidence once and for all. Dr. Raymon Brown, a geophysicist with the Oklahoma Geological Survey at the University of Oklahoma campus who sees evidence of multiple explosions in the seismic data, has been misquoted and maligned in press accounts and editorials. In a nasty and misleading editorial on February 18th entitled "A Restless Evil," the ***Daily Oklahoman*** falsely contended that Dr. Brown had reversed himself on the multiple blast scenario and, the paper opined, "Perhaps this will put an end to 'second explosion' speculation." Federal prosecutor Beth Wilkinson was quoted in news reports on February 22nd as saying, "No scientist in his right mind believes there were two bombs." Although Wilkinson was quoted in the context of addressing questions raised by General Benton Partin's analysis of the forensic evidence, the statement was clearly intended to apply to Dr. Brown and the seismic "dissidents" as well.

Such statements, however, do more to undermine the government's credibility and to raise suspicions about the motive for such attacks than to call into question the sanity of Dr. Brown or other scientists whose professional opinions may diverge from the line adopted by federal prosecutors. Science should be allowed to speak for itself; seismologists and geophysicists should be free to examine the seismic evidence and formulate their conclusions without coercion or intimidation. After all, if the data turn out to support a multiple-explosion hypothesis, that does not by any means exonerate Timothy McVeigh or Terry Nichols. Nor does it prove that "the government blew up its own building." It would, however, add support to the already voluminous evidence from other sources -- eyewitnesses, informants, forensic evidence, documents, etc. -- that McVeigh must have had confederates in the bombing plot who are still walking free. And this, in turn, would further erode the prosecution's already difficult credibility problem concerning its "lone bomber" theory.

"Two Strong Signals"

So, the big question remains: What does the seismic data show and what is the scientific consensus, if any, concerning that data? Much understandable public confusion has resulted because Dr. Brown's statements concerning one of the seismograms of April 19, 1995 has been falsely (mistakenly or otherwise) attributed to both of the seismograms. Brown has stated that what appeared to be two waves from two explosions on the OGS seismometer in Norman were actually two waves of different frequency from the same event traveling at different speeds and arriving at different times. This was one of the five possible explanations he had outlined for the phenomenon soon after the blast ([see THE NEW AMERICAN, August 7, 1995](#)). Extensive study of the seismogram, a comprehensive review of geologic formations under the Oklahoma City region, and a comparison of seismic data for the subsequent demolition of the Murrah Building have convinced him that the OGS (Norman) seismogram does not provide useful data for proving either the single or multiple blast hypotheses. The data from the Omniplex seismogram, though, is another matter. Because it was

much closer to the explosion, says Brown, it shows information that is difficult to explain under the single-blast theory. This is how he explained it in a February 18th interview with Jeff Bruccleri on the Oklahoma Radio Network, after having been badly misquoted and misrepresented in the preceding days:

If I may use some terminology, there were two signals observed in Norman. They were faint and weak because they had traveled 16 miles. And those two signals represent an artifact of wave propagation. It is caused by Rayleigh waves, a type of surface wave that seismologists observe, and they were dispersed -- and by that I mean different frequency signals were traveling at different speeds. So the two signals observed in Norman are a red herring, in my opinion. They made everyone think that there were two explosions, but it was just an artifact of this wave propagation effect that we're talking about.

There were two strong signals observed at the Omniplex on the day of the explosion. The second strong signal was a single package of energy that represented the air blast from the truck bomb. The first strong signal represented the three pulses that I claim to see in the data, and those three pulses I interpret to be very indicative of what took place at the Murrah Building on the day of the explosion. The first pulse and the third pulse are of intermediate size, but the second pulse is the biggest. So you actually have a bigger pulse of seismic energy, something hitting the ground harder after the truck bomb than during the truck bomb.

An explanation that has been offered to explain this anomalous pulse is the collapse of the building. Brown also considered this possibility among his five theories, but believes that the seismic data from the building demolition on May 23, 1995, together with other problems, make that explanation implausible. In the same February 18th radio interview Brown stated:

The second pulse observed on the day of the explosion that took place after the truck bomb explosion is higher in amplitude than the event that I'm describing as being associated with the three-quarters of the building collapsing. So the problem one has to overcome is the fact that you had more building collapsing during demolition and yet you did not get nearly the amount of seismic pulse that you got on the day of the explosion when one-quarter of the building was collapsing.

A few days earlier, in an interview with Mike McCarvel on radio KTOK in Oklahoma City, Brown was asked: "Do you think demolition -- individual demolition charges -- could account for any of this seismic activity [at the Omniplex]?" To which Dr. Brown responded, "You bet! In fact, my first impression at looking at the building was that this building had been wired.... I mean ... it looked like the damage had been done so with the demolition [charges]. If it's not, now I think the issue needs to be investigated ... by someone -- some independent agency."

Media Misrepresentation

One thing is quite clear from this and similar statements in the same interview: It is a total fabrication to claim that Dr. Ray Brown now claims that the evidence does not support a multiple-bomb hypothesis. Yet, following the KTOK interview, that is exactly what happened as the *Daily Oklahoman*, the *Dallas Morning News*, the Associated Press, Oklahoma City's ABC-TV affiliate, KTOK itself, and other news organizations ran stories completely misrepresenting what Brown had said.

Whether or not Dr. Brown is correct in his assertions is a separate matter over which reasonable minds may disagree. Which brings us to the subject of Professor Brown's mental stability. Are his statements the ravings of a scientist not "in his right mind," as some irresponsible government spokesmen might have us believe? Hardly.

This reporter has had probably more interaction with Brown than has any other journalist (according to Brown, most of those who have "quoted" him have never even bothered to interview him) and has never experienced anything but the most reasonable, competent, and conscientious professionalism on his part. His scientific colleagues hold him in high regard. Dean Clark, editor of *Leading Edge*, a professional journal of the Society of Exploration Geophysicists, told THE NEW AMERICAN that "Ray Brown is well-respected among geophysicists and has published many articles." Mr. Clark says he is looking forward to receiving an article from Brown on the seismic data related to the bombing. Dr. Charles Mankin, director of the Oklahoma Geological Survey, also expresses high confidence in the extensive research Brown has done into bombing data. Dr. David Deming, a professor of geophysics at the University of Oklahoma, and Russell Lyons, president of Quinella Seismic Research and former president of the Geophysical Society of Oklahoma City, also attest to Dr. Brown's stature as a scientist and have praised his original research on the bombing.

These evaluations by Dr. Brown's peers, and the merits of his research itself, should be the criteria on which his conclusions are judged, not the politically expedient and self-serving aspersions of government officials and agenda-driven media meisters.