

Experts: OKC Blast Couldn't Have Been Done by Truck Bomb Alone

Sunday, June 8, 1997 - McCurtain Sunday Gazette News
By Jeff Holladay

Fact? Or fiction?

A Ryder truck loaded with 4,000 to 4,800 pounds of ammonium nitrate and fuel oil caused the massive destruction of the Murrah building in Oklahoma City on April 19, 1995, killing 168 people and wounding hundreds of others.

Endlessly repeated as "truth" by federal prosecutors and most media reporters, it is an assertion questioned almost from the beginning by the McCurtain Daily Gazette and a handful of other newspapers and magazines.

Now comes additional evidence to buttress those earlier claims made by a retired Air Force general that a truck bomb could not have caused all the damage done to the Murrah building.

The Gazette learned just days before the bomb-wracked building was to be demolished on May 23, 1995, that Gen. Benton K. Partin had petitioned members of Oklahoma's congressional delegation to delay the destruction to preserve key evidence.

Despite attempts of Oklahoma's metropolitan newspapers to paint him as some right-wing nut and conspiracy theorist, Partin has impressive credentials. He is former director of the Air force Armament Technology Laboratory and considered one of the world's top authorities on military ordinance, weapons systems and explosives.

In letters hand-carried to members of Congress on May 17, Partin begged them to delay the demolition of the building to preserve evidence that he said would soon be "forever destroyed" — to no avail. Then he asserted that the destruction could not have been caused by a single truck bomb.

"From all the evidence I have seen in published material, I can say, with a high level of confidence, that the damaged pattern on the reinforced concrete superstructure could not possibly have been attained from the single truck bomb without supplementing demolition charges at some of the reinforced column bases" Partin's contentions brought swift agreement from the late Ed Jones of Idabel, a former Army demolition expert.

He said there was simply no way that a truck loaded with explosives could have caused the pattern of damages that hit the Murrah building.

He said there either had to have been bombs or other explosives in the basement or lower portion of the building. He speculated that the damage may have been caused by illegally stored C-4 or "plastique" explosives in the basement of the building.

Normally, despite being illegal, there would be no danger from such C-4 explosive, he said. It required a fuse to set it off.

But there was one other way it could be triggered — and that was 3,500 pounds of pressure per square inch. And the collapsing building could have supplied that pressure, he speculated.

Experts Agree with Partin

Now, the June 9 edition of "New American" magazine said it had interviewed architects, engineers, scientists and demolition expert who agree with Partin's contentions that the Ryder truck bomb could not have caused the damage. "One of the strongest statements of support comes from Dr. Sam T. Cohen, the inventor of the neutron bomb and one of our nation's foremost nuclear weapons analysts, who says: 'I believe that demolition charges in the building, placed at certain key concrete columns, did the primary damage to the Murrah Federal Building. It would have been absolutely impossible and against the laws of nature for a truck full of fertilizer and oil — no matter how much was used — to bring the building down.

The government's truck bomb story, he said, just "doesn't work."

Further adding doubt to the government's truck bomb theory is an investigation of the FBI crime lab, the magazine said.

Coming in for severe censure by the Department of Justice's Inspector General was FBI explosive analyst Dave Williams. He was criticized for the unscientific — some would say "fraudulent" — methods by which he concluded that the Ryder truck used in the Oklahoma City bombing had contained a 4,000-pounds bomb of ammonium nitrate and fuel oil.

Curiously, the conservative magazine reports, the IG's report did not question the FBI's lone truck bomb thesis per se. But it might as well have, since it found that Williams' conclusions about the weight and composition of the explosive device, its velocity of detonation, the type of detonators used and the type of containers were all pronounced "flawed," "without a scientific basis" and appeared "to tailor the opinion to evidence associated with the defendants."

FEMA Report Dismissed

The magazine also contends that General Partin's contentions are unwittingly given support by the analysis of the bombing conducted by engineers for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE).

Extrapolating from the bomb crater size, FEMA/ASCE said the blast was "equivalent to the detonation of 4,000 pounds of TNT."

But experts say 4,000 pounds of TNT would be roughly four times more powerful than the ammonium nitrate-fuel oil (ANFO) fuel bomb.

That would make the alleged Ryder truck bomb tip the scales at around 15,000 pounds — a weight the experts seriously doubt the Ryder truck was carrying. So how do federal prosecutors try to explain away this obvious discrepancy? They contend that McVeigh used nitromethane racing fuel or hydrazine rocket fuel to "juice up" the truck bomb's explosive power.

The "New American" magazine contacted experts who said such accelerants could significantly boost the explosive power of the ammonium nitrate-fuel oil bomb — but not anywhere near the equivalent of 4,000 pounds of TNT. Moreover, the demolition experts contacted by the magazine say even 4,000 pounds of TNT would fail to take out the massive columns of the Murrah building by "brisance," or a shattering effect, as claimed by FEMA/ASCE.

What is so patently absurd about the FEMA/ASCE report, the magazine reported its engineers and demolition experts as saying, is the assertion that blast pressure waves would pass up a nearer column and destroy one farther away. The only way the damage to the Murrah building could have been done, they all agree, would be internal bomb charges. General Partin minced no words in saying the FEMA/ASCE report was phony as a \$3 bill — and plainly suggested it was further evidence of a government coverup.

"Now even if that column were damaged sufficiently by brisance to cause it to fail, it would still be there — perhaps severely shattered and damaged, but the large steel rebar and much of the concrete would still be there," he told the magazine. "Yet FEMA says it couldn't be found.

Something that massive doesn't just disappear.

"But an even bigger problem is this: They say the column was destroyed by brisance, but the concrete transfer beam which was at the same location and subjected to the very same brisance shows no evidence of spallation.

"Now you can't have it both ways; you can't have brisance utterly destroying the column and not even scratching the beam. It doesn't work that way.