

# JURY FOREWOMAN ACCUSES FBI OF BUNGLING IN NICHOLS CASE



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The forewoman of the jury that convicted Terry L. Nichols of conspiracy in the Oklahoma City bombing and then couldn't agree on a sentence accused the FBI Wednesday of being sloppy, arrogant and unwilling to pursue aggressively other possible co-conspirators.

"The government dropped the ball," Niki Deutchman said, embracing the belief held by many that others beyond Nichols and Timothy J. McVeigh helped carry out the bombing.

"I think there are other people out there, and decisions were probably made very early on (by the government) that Tim McVeigh and Terry Nichols were who they were looking for. And the same sort of resources were not used to try to find out who else might be involved," she told reporters. In Washington today, Attorney General Janet Reno defended the FBI investigation and said she believes the government has found the people responsible for the bombing. "I think the FBI did an excellent job," Ms. Reno said at her weekly news conference. "They interviewed over 30,000 witnesses. They pursued innumerable leads. And I think they did so based on appropriate standards for how to conduct an investigation." Mrs. Deutchman, an obstetrical nurse, also said the jury thought the government's case would have been stronger if FBI investigators had tape-recorded their 9 1/2-hour interview with Nichols. "A lot of things could have been very helpful if they were on tape," she said of the FBI interview that took place three days after the April 19, 1995, bombing that killed 168 people. "It seems arrogant of the FBI to say, 'We have total recall,' " she said. "A lot of things about the evidence seemed to be sloppy." After 13 1/2 hours of deliberations, U.S. District Judge Richard P. Matsch dismissed the jurors Wednesday when it became apparent they couldn't agree on Nichols' exact role in the deadliest terrorist act on U.S. soil. Mrs. Deutchman said the evidence did not show that Nichols

was present or directly implicated "with anything." Matsch now will have to sentence Nichols, but under federal law he cannot impose the death penalty -- a prerogative reserved for the jury. Nichols still could face a death sentence if Oklahoma proceeds with state charges against him. Matsch set a Feb. 9 deadline for both sides to file legal arguments on what sentence he should hand down. A hearing will follow.