

# Researchers: Garland Should Reopen OKC Bombing Case He Helped Prosecute

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Attorney General Merrick Garland testifies during a Senate hearing in Washington on June 9, 2021. (Susan Walsh/Pool/Getty Images)

By Ken Silva

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During the tenure of Attorney General Merrick Garland, the Department of Justice launched an investigation into threats of violence against school board members, pushed for severe sentences against Jan. 6 defendants, and created a new domestic counterterrorism office—all with the stated aim of combating white supremacy and domestic extremism.

But if Garland really wants to combat violent racists, according to researchers of the subject, then he should reopen the case he worked on 27 years ago and find the accomplices of Oklahoma City bomber and avowed white supremacist Timothy McVeigh.

“Garland can kick off any effort to curtail white supremacists by finishing his work on the OKC bombing case,” OKC researcher Richard Booth wrote last year when Garland took the helm at the DOJ. “And he can finish by apologizing to the American people for letting

dangerous still-unidentified white supremacists get away with being accessories to murder for the last 25 years.”

Booth provided records to The Epoch Times for this story—which marks the 27th anniversary of the April 19, 1995, domestic terrorism attack—and he’s far from alone in arguing that the case should be reexamined. Others include Kathy Sanders, who spent decades looking for answers after her two grandchildren died in the attack; Utah attorney Jesse Trentadue, who’s procured thousands of FBI records via lawsuits against the U.S. government; historian Wendy Painting, who wrote her doctoral thesis on McVeigh; and the late investigator Roger Charles.

These researchers have spent untold thousands of hours documenting the connections between McVeigh, the criminal underground of the white supremacist movement, and undercover federal informants—making the case that this tangled web has shielded some of those culpable for murdering 168 people, including 19 children, in the deadliest domestic terrorist attack in this country’s history. They have also chronicled the dozens of witnesses who reportedly saw one or more unidentified co-conspirators in the days and hours leading up to the attack.

And the researchers aren’t alone in calling for another investigation. Retired FBI agents Danny Coulson and Danny Defenbaugh, who both worked on the case, have publicly supported reopening the matter.

Garland should be aware of these matters, having discussed McVeigh’s enigmatic accomplice, “John Doe 2,” court transcripts show.

Additionally, The Epoch Times received previously unpublished White House visitor logs showing the attorney general’s apparent visit to “FLOTUS” the day before he led the prosecution at McVeigh’s preliminary hearing—raising questions about why he’d met with then-First Lady Hillary Clinton before jetting 1,300 miles west to Oklahoma.

The researchers and former law enforcement officials have offered varying opinions about Garland. However, they mostly share doubt in his assertion that the DOJ and FBI “did everything we could possibly do to find every person who was involved” with the attack. Garland and the DOJ didn’t respond to requests for comment.



Floodlights illuminate the Albert P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City on April 20, 1995, as rescuers continue searching for bodies in the aftermath of the April 19 explosion caused by a fuel and fertilizer truck bomb that was detonated early April 19 in front of the building. (PDAEMMRICH/AFP via Getty Images)

## Garland's Role

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When President Barack Obama nominated him to the Supreme Court in 2016, the president heaped praise on Garland's role in prosecuting the perpetrator of the deadliest domestic terrorist attack in U.S. history.

"In the wake of the bombing, he traveled to Oklahoma to oversee the case, and in the ensuing months coordinated every aspect of the government's response, working with federal agents, rescue workers, local officials, and others to bring the perpetrators to justice," Obama said.

Some of Garland's public comments about the case also resurfaced when he was nominated to be attorney general last year.

"It's the issue about conspiracy theories, about 'Maybe somebody else did it' or 'You hadn't done everything,'" Garland reportedly said in a 2013 oral history about the case. "I wanted to be sure we had done everything we could possibly do to find every person who was involved." However, some top former FBI officials who investigated the attack have raised eyebrows at Obama's description of Garland, as well as the attorney general's own words.

"The people who ran the case at the DOJ, that wasn't him," said Coulson, who was in charge of the crime scene. "Merrick Garland was mainly there for his resume, I think."

Coulson’s colleague, former FBI agent Bob Ricks—who led the bureau’s investigation—said he got along well with Garland, but that “his role was a limited one.”

“He [Garland] was sent, in my understanding, primarily to be of assistance, and as the representative of the DOJ during that time period,” he told *The Epoch Times*. “A difficulty we had was that our United States Attorney had resigned, and the acting U.S. Attorney had very limited experience.

“So we had a vacuum there that did exist. DOJ sent out two attorneys. One was Garland,” said Ricks, who disagrees with the researchers and his former colleague Coulson, taking the position that the Oklahoma City bombing case was solved and needn’t be reopened.

Sanders, the grandmother of two of the victims, has little recollection of Garland from that era. But as one of the “Oklahoma City Dissidents”—a term coined by British writer Ambrose Evans-Pritchard to describe a group of bombing survivors and victim family members who have been critical of the FBI’s investigation—her research has raised numerous questions that still linger.



Kathy Sanders, who lost two grandchildren to the Oklahoma City bombing, and survivor V.Z. Lawton pose at the Oklahoma City bombing memorial site in 2010. (Photo Courtesy Wendy Painting)

“First of all, I have a problem that the FBI never identified the people seen coming and going from the Dreamland Hotel, where McVeigh stayed the week before the bombing,” she said, referring to multiple witnesses who saw numerous people coming and going from McVeigh’s

hotel room. “He drove right from the Dreamland to the Murrah Building to blow it up. I think it’s important to know who those people were.”

Other questions Sanders still wants to be answered include: Where is the “John Doe 2,” the man seen with McVeigh by at least 24 witnesses on the morning of the attack? And what happened to the surveillance footage of the bombing referenced in Secret Service records and FBI memos?

Sanders has more unanswered questions about McVeigh’s connection to Elohim City, a private compound in Oklahoma that was home to neo-Nazi criminals, Klansmen, and white supremacists of every other stripe. Elohim City was also crawling with multiple undercover informants, including a Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) informant who warned the ATF in 1994 and 1995 that people living there were planning to bomb federal buildings in Oklahoma, according to court testimony from the informant’s handler.

“I don’t have all the pieces to the puzzle, but I have enough to know that everyone involved in that crime was not arrested,” Sanders said.

But when asked about Garland’s comment about finding “every person who was involved” in the murder of her grandchildren, she gave him the benefit of the doubt. The author of a book on forgiveness, Sanders is concentrated more on her charity work for victims of the war in Ukraine these days than she is on criticizing Garland.

“He could be very sincere, but he might not know everything,” she said of the attorney general.





Timothy McVeigh (C) being led from Noble County Courthouse in Perry, Okla., on April 21, 1995.  
(BOB DAEMMERICH/AFP via Getty Images)

## Garland at the Preliminary Hearing

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However, records show that Garland is at least familiar with some of the questions that still linger with Sanders and others. [Court transcripts](#) chronicle Garland's discussions about John Doe 2 during McVeigh's April 27, 1995, preliminary hearing.

Garland started the hearing with his witness, FBI agent Jon Hersley, who outlined the government's case against McVeigh. Hersley said first responders recovered an axle from the Ryder Truck that exploded outside the Murrah Building, using the serial number on the part to trace where the truck came from, eventually leading investigators to McVeigh.

Defense attorney John Coyle, who was representing McVeigh at the time, then cross-examined Hersley. When Coyle attempted to inquire into John Doe 2, Garland objected.

"Did this particular witness indicate to agents of the FBI how many persons were in the speeding yellow Mercury?" Coyle asked Hersley, referencing a witness who saw McVeigh leaving the scene with another man.

“Two,” Hersley responded.

“Did this witness also identify the person that we know as number 2, ‘unsub [unidentified subject] 2’ at the scene?” Coyle asked, referencing John Doe 2.

Garland objected to this question, telling the presiding judge that “unsub 2 is not before the court.”

The judge sustained the objection.

But later during the cross-examination, Hersley referenced “occupants” of the Ryder Truck—leading Coyle to ask about John Doe 2 again, and for Garland to object once more.

“Did you tell me [the witness] saw occupants of a Ryder Truck and there was more than one?” Coyle asked the FBI agent.

“Objection,” Garland interjected. “The only person on trial at this hearing is Mr. McVeigh. It doesn’t matter whether there were two or 100 people in that truck as long as there was somebody representing Mr. McVeigh there. It is discovery and totally outside of the scope of this hearing.”

Coyle urged the judge to overrule the objection.

“May I respond? I think it is important to see if we distinguish it as the same truck or not. I think it is very important to the credibility of the witness and credibility of the evidence and what they saw as to whether or not the person saw three or five or six,” Coyle argued.

This time, the judge agreed with Coyle, overruling Garland.

After Coyle repeated his question, the FBI agent said: “This witness advised that there were two individuals in the truck. The individual resembling Mr. McVeigh was the driver.”

Despite the revelation from Hersley, Coyle didn’t pursue the matter further and stepped down as McVeigh’s attorney shortly after the hearing. He didn’t respond to an interview request for this story.

Trentadue and Charles both said they thought Coyle performed remarkably well during the hearing, considering he had been thrown into the case immediately before the hearing.

“He was really thrown into the thick of it,” Charles said.

Trentadue and Charles chastised Garland for what he didn’t examine as much as they did his objections.

“I would have questioned Hersley about that videotape,” said Trentadue, who has been suing the FBI for decades in pursuit of surveillance footage showing the bombing.

To Trentadue’s point, the court transcript indeed also shows Garland objecting when Coyle asked the name of the FBI agent who handled the “film footage”—another matter left unexamined by both parties.



Judge Merrick B. Garland listens as U.S. President Barack Obama nominates him to the U.S. Supreme Court, in the Rose Garden at the White House, March 16, 2016. (Mark Wilson/Getty Images)

## Garland’s White House Visit

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If Garland’s performance at the preliminary hearing raises questions with the researchers, then a document they found a few years ago left them even more baffled. The record in question is an entry in the White House visitor logs that indicates that Garland was there the night before McVeigh’s preliminary hearing.

According to the 230,644th entry in the 1995 White House visitors logs, Garland signed in at 5:30 p.m. to visit “FLOTUS” in room 450 on April 26. The logs state that Garland’s “visitor access type” was “VA,” but don’t explain the designation.

Garland’s visit to the White House was discovered by Booth and Charles, the latter of whom worked a brief stint on McVeigh’s defense team. The Epoch Times interviewed Charles, also the co-author of “Oklahoma City: What the Investigation Missed, and Why It Still Matters,” about a week before he died in February.



“Garland goes to Oklahoma April 21, and I thought he stayed until the 12th or 13th of May; I hadn’t seen anything indicating that he went to DC,” Charles told this reporter. “But I asked Richard [Booth] to get the White House visitor logs from the Clinton Library—and there’s Merrick Garland meeting with Hillary [Clinton].”

Trentadue, who has procured volumes of new information about the OKC bombing investigation via his [lawsuits against the FBI](#), said he was astonished at the finding. “That would have been the most important hearing in [Garland’s] life. He would have been there for days going through all the evidence,” Trentadue said.

Former FBI agents Coulson and Ricks both said they were less surprised at the finding.

“It was the most significant thing that was going on in the United States at the time, so it wouldn’t surprise me that the political side of the administration would want to be appraised of what was going on,” Ricks said.

“Like I said, he was kind of the point man for the Department of Justice, so I didn’t realize he was back there the day before the preliminary hearing, but it wouldn’t surprise me. You know, he was in and out ... He really wasn’t trying to direct the investigation. He was there to monitor and follow where it was going.”

But Trentadue wonders what was so important that it couldn’t be discussed over the phone.

“If Garland were briefing someone [about the case], wouldn’t it be done by phone?” Trentadue asked.

Booth—who provided this reporter with the visitor logs and Clinton Library receipts to show their authenticity—said he believes Garland’s White House visit must have been related to the McVeigh case due to its monumental importance. The researcher said he hasn’t found further details about the meeting.

But regardless of what Garland did 27 years ago, he should reopen the investigation, Booth said.

For her part, Sanders still has hope that all those responsible for her grandchildren’s murders will be brought to justice—though maybe not in her lifetime.

“I’ve watched my late husband die, [Oklahoma City bombing investigator and journalist] J.D. [Cash] die, now Roger Charles, and [fellow Oklahoma City Dissident] Jannie Coverdale,” she said. “Jesse Trentadue and I are about the only two left.”

Despite the lack of answers after 27 years, Sanders still counts her blessings.

“I was downtown in the bombing with my daughter, and both my grandchildren died. But when the Ukrainian war began, I saw the buildings being bombed and it brought it all back to me,” she said. “I thought, ‘Man, I get to go home at night. After our babies were killed, I did

get to go home and sleep in my own bed.”



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