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SOLDIER OF FORTUNE
AUGUST 1995



Upper floors of A.P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City viewed toward the southeast, the day after, shows severity of bomb blast.

The line wasn't busy. The line — and her husband — were dead, obliterated in a blast of some two tons of ammonium nitrate and fuel oil, or ANFO. The explosion forever changed the lives of hundreds of vic-

Bloody April

Waco Anniversary Triggers Oklahoma City Atrocity

by James L. Pate

Photos by Richard Sherrow

tims, their families and friends. But it was also a horrifying wake-up call that forever changed us all. Its social fallout may cast a dark shadow well into the next century, possibly foreboding what may be an oppressive and violent chapter in our nation's history. The nation's symbolic journey to Oklahoma City went through Waco, Texas. The Oklahoma bombing was an awful reckoning, an eruption of the festering sore burned into the national soul by the Waco massacre. It may prove to be a watershed event in the tricky balance between individual liberty, public safety and state security as our society evolves into the next millennium.

My road to Oklahoma City the day of the bombing was literally through Waco, a straight shot up Interstate 35. I've spent most of the past two years pursuing the facts of what happened in Waco, months of that time in Texas. I had just spoken at a second anniversary memorial service in front of the scarred, twisted remains left by the fiery finale to the Battle of Mount Carmel. I was trying to stay dry in a spring drizzle when the news of Oklahoma City washed over me with a cold splash of disbelief.

I'm surprised that I was surprised by carnage in the Sooner State. After all, for two weeks before the bombing killed 168 people, including 19

children, I'd been warning in speeches and on radio talk shows of an ugly, defiant and potentially violent mood lingering over the ashes of Waco. It was vital, I said, for Congress to hold thorough hearings in which facts could be presented from independent investigations. Agents guilty of incompetent or malicious acts must be punished to restore faith in the legitimacy of federal law enforcement. If not, I knew, there were plenty of half-cocked half-wits capable of full-bore stupidity. But I never expected it to be so unprovoked. So irrational. So savage. So soon.

After visiting California, Louisiana, Montana, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Texas this year, I'd become aware that the Clinton administration and Congress had failed to accurately gauge the depth and breadth of public fear and loathing over the Waco raid. Soon after the bombing, some in the mass media began suggesting possible blame among those who have persisted in pursuing the Waco story; that we had unfairly inflamed the passions of the common rabble. Resolutely unbiased reporters, who'd resolutely ignored everything about Waco except Big Brother's party line, characterized concern over Waco as a "paranoid obsession" of "right-wing extremist groups." But public outrage over

Waco spans the political spectrum, and deepens as more facts come to light. It is not an issue of the left or right, but one of right and wrong.

The Oklahoma bombing is another



Skyline of A.P. Murrah Federal Building after bombing shows how blast went upward through 10 stories, inward the depth of several offices.

notch on the truncheon of events that have stunned us with increasing regularity. And no doubt we, as a society, will fail to come to terms with this event before another of even more numbing magnitude overtakes us, compounding even more our inability to meet new challenges. Tactical analysts have coined an acronym for the phenomena: OBE — Overcome By Events — things happen faster than people can respond and they lose control.

Future Shock?

No one seriously believed that the East Germans would act on Ronald Reagan's call for communist leaders to tear down the Berlin Wall. Stranger still was the idea that Germany would reunite. No one believed the Soviet Union would throw in the towel on communism and dismember itself voluntarily. Just as no one imagined that any of our own citizens — on either side of the law — would burn or bomb buildings full of innocent people.

No doubt the social and political mavens of the mass media will cluck about the paranoia of right-wing extremism to anyone who suggests that this nation might, within the same half-century of defeating the evil empires of Hitler and Stalin, descend into its own oddly mixed maelstrom of left-wing McCarthyism

and police state tyranny.

When I was in Idaho in 1992, reporting the federal government's assault on Randy Weaver's family cabin, I'd have regarded anyone as paranoid who would have predicted another atrocity of even grander scale only eight months later in Waco. Even after the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Flashbangs botched so badly its Mount Carmel attack on 28 February 1993, I remained confident that cooler, more competent heads would prevail at the Federal Bureau of Incineration. Instead, the

same FBI H(u)RT perpetrators of the Idaho tragedy precipitated a law-enforcement travesty 50 times more deadly in Texas. And now, Oklahoma City confronts us with the potential for causing even greater divisiveness than Waco.

The immediate challenge on hearing the news, though, was to get to Oklahoma City as quickly as possible. Attending the memorial service at Mount Carmel with me was Rick Sherrow, an arson and explosives expert who also writes for *Soldier Of Fortune*. Sherrow retired from the Army as an EOD technician and later worked as a bomb and arson investigator for BATF. Rick's expertise during his government career led him into assignments with the CIA in Africa and elsewhere. I knew he would be a valuable asset interpreting the bomb scene, but I had no idea he would actually find key parts of the bomb vehicle.

Survivors And Heroes

Once in Oklahoma City, the chilly, wet weather was not only compounding the difficult task of rescuers working frantically to dig out the living, but it also reduced chances of survival for those trapped in the dangerously unstable rubble. As it turned out, chances were slim anyway. The last live victim was dug out of the concrete and steel wreckage at about

2215 hours by Dr. Rick Nelson of Muskogee, Oklahoma, a surgeon who drove the 138 miles to Oklahoma City to volunteer his services. It took Dr. Nelson and a firefighter about two hours to remove enough debris to free 15-year-old Brandi Ligon.

"I was working for some time alongside a fireman," Nelson told me the next morning. "We were passing back a lot of this material, because there was little room to work where we were. I discovered after several minutes — maybe an hour — that I was actually working on top of a dead person that was unrecognizable. I found some hair. One of the fireman said, 'That's some insulation material.' I picked it up and said no. It was all I could recognize, some hair and some bloody tissue that resembled pink insulation."

There were three other dead bodies within 10 feet of where Brandi lay trapped, Nelson said. "When I got to Brandi's face, I put oxygen on her," Nelson said. "I was very concerned the last 15 or 20 minutes because her mental status started



Blast collapsed cinder-block structure three blocks to the northwest of federal building. Some 75 buildings in area were rendered uninhabitable by explosion.

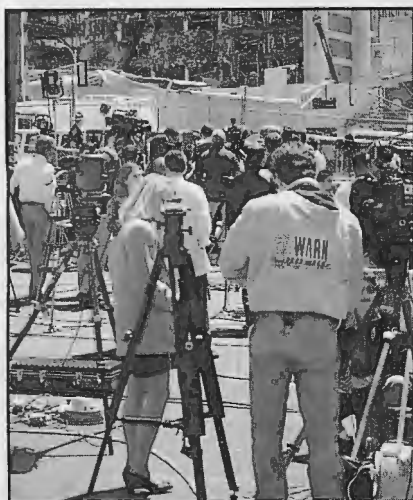
deteriorating. I was afraid she was bleeding internally.

"Even in a situation like this, we tried to inject a little levity. I told her I was going to take her to dinner when we dug her out," Nelson said. "She laughed and agreed. She told us all that she loved us. Her legs were cramped off for quite a while. It was of great concern to us. She had blood in her abdomen; a ruptured spleen. Her blood pressure was about 60." Nelson's professional detachment melted away, his eyes misting up at the memory of one girl whose bravery touched him personally as no patient ever had.

"I can't imagine the horror of being stuck in there, to not even be able to lift a finger. You can breathe, but you have no idea what happened to you. All you know is you're trapped in concrete and rubble and you hear sirens, elevator alarms going off. I have patients who come in [to the office] who are out of control for absolutely no reason, really not that sick or in that much danger. This girl was way beyond her years."

Truck Parts Three Blocks Away

Sherrow and I split up. I had to go to the obligatory press conference, and he wanted to take photographs and probe around to see what he could



Media, talk-show hosts, politicians and rescue volunteers descended on disaster scene to do what they do best.

find out about the bomb itself. I was still sitting in the press conference when Sherrow slipped into the seat next to me and whispered that he'd found part of the bomb truck.

We hurried back to the scene where Rick had found the evidence, which he examined, but was careful not to touch. He'd advised nearby ATF bomb techs, who spray-painted yellow around the truck parts to mark their location until evidence techs could process them, catalogue the pieces and remove them. The pieces had not been moved when we got back to Northwest 5th Street, two-and-a-half blocks west of the blast crater.

The rear bumper of the Ryder truck was twisted like a pretzel, lying on the south sidewalk. Sherrow showed me where the bolt heads that had held the bumper to the truck chassis had



been stripped through the holes in the bumper. In the middle of the street, a cucumber-sized gouge mark in the asphalt had alerted him that bomb evidence might be nearby. It looked like any other hole in the asphalt to me, but Rick called it an impact mark and said it gave some indication of speed and direction of an object hurled by the explosive blast.

The mark, he said, apparently had been made by the bomb truck's rear transaxle ring gear, which attaches to the rear end of the drive shaft inside the differential. He'd found the gear, more than a foot in diameter, in a dirt parking lot on the north side of the street, about 30 yards from the gouge in the pavement. The gear had struck a six-foot-high chain-link fence so hard that it jerked the steel fence posts from the ground on both sides and collapsed the fence.

The rear end of the drive shaft has teeth that insert through a smooth collar on the ring gear and mesh with teeth in the gear's inner hub. Sherrow showed me the rough scars inside the smooth steel collar made when the drive axle teeth were jerked out of

the ring gear with explosive force. It took two ATF agents to lift the ring gear into the back of an evidence truck. We were moved back another block as they extended the security perimeter to look for other parts.

Rick's find struck me. In an age of



Top: Rear bumper of Ryder truck found by SOF reporter/EOD technician Sherrow 2-1/2 blocks from blast seat. Initial exam suggested truck may have been a Ford Model EC-350. Bumper was shown to investigative personnel, who marked it for further processing.

Right: Impact gouge in asphalt (foreground) was made by transaxle gear of bomb truck. In background is chain-link fence torn down by flying gear, and final resting place of gear. After discovery by SOF, site of gouge was marked by evidence techs.

Center left: Bomb truck's rear transaxle gear rests tangled in chain-link fence that finally stopped it.

computerized super-sleuthing and miraculous laboratory criminology, it was still the gumshoe, the guy with sharp eyes and common sense and experience out on the street, that could make the difference. Indeed, the FBI's big break that gave them a solid trail to follow came from good, old-fashioned, by-the-book police

Continued on page 85

lieve the earth is flat, but the discourse ends when they pick up weapons and attempt to apply their justice of force upon the rest of us. Much of the rest of us are equally as angered and frustrated by what has happened to our system of governance. But that same system provides measures by which it may be corrected.

Many of us are well-informed, not the ignorant masses these self-proclaimed saviors believe. Their truth and understanding are, far more often than not, just plain wrong. I could not find one instance of educational material, documentation or evidence that was not without the most egregious errors and outright fabrications.

Our skies are full of aircraft, black and otherwise. As a nation, we are extending military authority closer and closer to domestic law enforcement support. It's all quite legal, although I have written and lectured on the threat posed by some of this legislation, such as amending the Posse Comitatus Act of 1878.

We are once again at the same place. You've seen a black helicopter? So what. It means precisely nothing.

ing. It's only when the warped interpretations of militia conspiracists are used to put your sighting into their context that it becomes anything threatening. Fact is, there's not one shred of evidence that anything sinister is going on.

Craig B. Hulet is a policy analyst with KC & Associates (Box 710, Amanda Park WA 98526; phone: 360-288-2652) who has authored numerous papers on militia-related topics. Send SASE, \$2 for list. ✕

OKLAHOMA

Continued from page 69

work. If it weren't for Oklahoma Highway Patrol Trooper Charlie Hanger, who stopped Timothy McVeigh for failure to have a license plate, and then arrested him on a concealed weapon charge, the FBI might well still be looking for suspects.

But then, if the federal government followed its own advice about preventing terrorist attacks on fed-

eral buildings — if it had bothered to read the expensive studies it regularly commissions — the Oklahoma bombing might have been averted, or at least the loss of life reduced.

The National Research Council filed a report assessing our vulnerability to terrorist attacks on federal buildings in 1988, according to *The Kansas City Star*. The report "warned of massive loss of life in a disaster strikingly similar to the blast that rocked Oklahoma City," the newspaper reported. "Its predictions were uncannily accurate."

The taxpayer-funded report "specifically pointed out the danger of locating a day-care center in the same building with law enforcement agencies." Questioned after the bombing, federal officials pleaded lack of funding to implement the recommendations. But some were inexpensive, commonsense suggestions. For example, the report said the Murrah building could improve its security against terrorist attack merely by restricting adjacent parking, "to reduce the possibility of a preset bomb vehicle."

Federal investigators believe the



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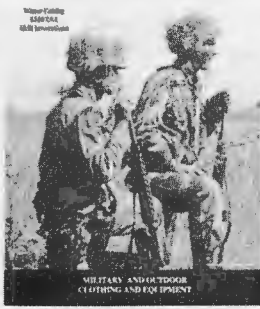
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bombers parked a 20-foot yellow Ryder rental truck in a handicapped parking space in front of the building's main entrance. Instead of increasing its security detail in the building, as the government report recommends, the feds farmed out the security contract to a private firm that had one rent-a-cop on duty — who, luckily for the hapless guard, was not in the lobby at 0902 hours.

The reduction of security personnel in the Murrah building came at a time when the ATF and FBI offices in Oklahoma City have been receiving an increasing number of threats, the Kansas newspaper reported. The FBI's office there is actually located in another building, several miles away. The ATF office, which was on the ninth floor of the bombed-out structure, had been especially targeted by telephone threats since the Waco raid, according to the newspaper.

A U.S. Public Health Service employee also told *SOF* that the Department of Housing and Urban Development office on the eighth floor had received a telephone bomb threat "a day or two" prior to the bombing. At his news conference, FBI agent Weldon Kennedy denied that such a threat had been made.

"How many lives could they have saved?" asked John Pignato, an international terrorism consultant who helped write the threat assessment for the General Services Administration, which operates most federal office buildings. "We were trying to be preventive in nature when we put the report out. But a lot of reports get, 'Thank you, here's your check.' Then they go on the bookshelf."

Can Guilty Be Convicted?

But before they answer any questions about that glaring lapse, the feds have more immediate problems. The agent in charge of the ATF's National Response Team, which is in charge of investigating the bomb evidence, is himself the target of a fraud, bribery and mismanagement investigation, *The Washington Times* reported. Joe Adamcik is accused of accepting favors from corrupt police officers in Chicago — Cubs tickets, cases of liquor and \$1,500 in treated lumber for a new deck at his home. He's also accused of looking the other way when Chicago police officers working with ATF stole cash from drug

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Sincerely,
Busse Combat Knife Co.

The Expo is held at The Sands Convention Center Sept. 29-Oct 1. For more info on the 1995 *SOF* Expo call 1-800-800-7630 or write to: *SOF '95* Expo P.O. Box 693 Boulder, CO 80306.

dealers, and of steering ATF vehicle repair contracts to a friend who is a convicted felon with alleged ties to organized crime figures in Chicago.

Adamcik, now in California, was assistant special agent in charge of the Chicago office when the alleged offenses occurred. The former special agent in charge, Joe Vince, is also accused in the investigation by the Treasury Department's inspector general staff, *The Times* said. Vince, who has been implicated in other internal investigations of alleged criminal conduct on the job, was recently promoted to a job at ATF headquarters.

Chicago-area Congressman Harris W. Fawell said he found the allegations against Adamcik "so darned serious" that he discussed them directly with ATF Director John Magaw, who "just made it clear to me he wasn't interested in this."

Treasury Department Assistant Inspector General James M. Cotton told *The Times* that Adamcik's being a target of a criminal investigation raises the possibility that evidence gathered in the Oklahoma City investigation might be compromised in court. "If, for instance, he is a key witness in this case, his credibility could be a problem."

But if history repeats itself, Adamcik's potentially tainted testimony won't be any problem for the government. The federal prosecutor who tries McVeigh, still the main suspect as this article goes to press, simply won't call Adamcik as a witness. This was the tactic used by Assistant U.S. Attorney Ray Jahn, who tried 11 Branch Davidians in the Waco case. All Davy Aguilera, the Waco case agent, did at the trial was operate the government's overhead projector, a mindless task for which he apparently was imminently qualified and well trained.

As almost everyone *except* the federal government has learned from Waco, such lack of accountability and arrogance of power has its price. What remains to be seen is if citizens must continue to pay the price even after the Oklahoma bombing.

James L. Pate's award-winning coverage of government mishandling of events that led to the Waco debacle will continue with coverage of events triggered by that tragedy. ✕

GUN OWNERS

Continued from page 35

sic NFO program, and was teaching other pilots to become instructors.

Through a transition of other flying and administrative assignments with other squadrons over the next few years, Cunningham entered the Training in Administration of the Reserves (TAR) program, in which he continued to fly while learning about the Navy's aviation reserve units. To progress, Guy realized he needed a master's degree. In May 1992, he flew his last P3 mission and soon thereafter enrolled at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California.

Cunningham, who now serves with the Navy's reserve manpower analysis unit in Memphis, Tennessee, was as shocked by the response to his thesis research as the public was by its questionnaire. It has led to personal interviews with members of Congress, as well as dozens of requests for interviews from journalists. He believes the findings of his research will be the subject of policy debate for some time to come. (Advance warning for next month's story: 26.34% of the 300 Marines said they would fire on U.S. citizens and 23.66% were willing to swear allegiance to the United Nations.)

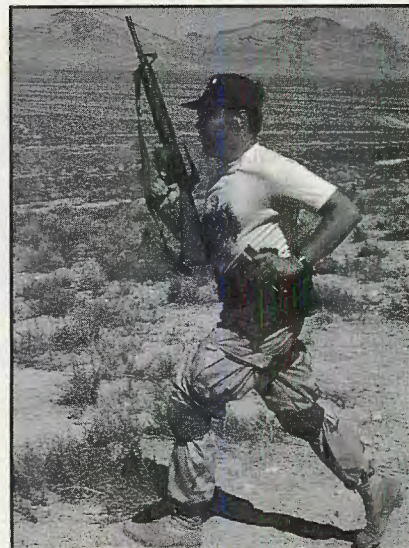
But there is cause for hope for those opposed to President Clinton's vision of a future in which national sovereignty is subverted in favor of a leftist U.N. agenda. "The research suggests that the overwhelming majority of combat-trained soldiers, if given a choice, would prefer not to perform any mission under the operational control of the United Nations," Cunningham said. "Anyone that really knows me knows that I'm not a neutral kind of fellow, that I'm very strong in my convictions ... If you're a believer in sovereignty of any nation, you cannot be a believer in collective security. Because there is a point when the justification of collective security comes with the diminishing of an individual nation's sovereignty."

Look for a detailed analysis of Cunningham's survey in next month's SOF. ✕

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