

Explosive Evidence of a Cover-up

by William F. Jasper

Mysteries in Oklahoma City bombing begin to unravel

Since his critical analysis of the Oklahoma City bombing appeared in the June 26th issue of THE NEW AMERICAN ("OKC Bombing: Expert Analysis"), Brigadier General Benton K. Partin (USAF, Ret.) has been a busy man. Besides being interviewed on dozens of radio and television programs, he has traveled to Oklahoma City to examine forensic evidence not previously available to him. What he found there is nothing less than -- *highly explosive*.

Photographic evidence, together with architectural assessments of the structural integrity of the remainder of the building after the blast, offer strong support for the general's conclusion in his initial analysis that demolition charges had been used in addition to the truck bomb.

From the outset of the April 19th blast, General Partin was convinced there was something fishy about the official story attributing the devastation at the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building solely to a truck bomb. The laws of physics and a lifetime of experience with explosives and munitions told him that both the magnitude and the pattern of damage were totally inconsistent with a single bomb, especially one detonated outside of the building on the street.

"When I first saw the pictures of the truck bomb's asymmetrical damage to the federal building," Partin said, "my immediate reaction was that the pattern of damage would have been technically impossible without supplementing demolition charges at some of the reinforced concrete column bases, a standard demolition technique."

Appeal for Action

In a letter which he personally delivered to the Capitol offices of 56 members of Congress on May 18th, the general, one of our nation's premiere munitions and explosives experts, detailed some of the many problems with the official version of the bombing and appealed for action to delay the demolition of the building so that vital evidence would not be destroyed. "A careful examination of the collapsed column bases would readily reveal a failure mode produced by a demolition charge," he wrote. "This evidence would be so critical, a separate and independent assessment should be made before a building demolition team destroys the evidence forever."

Unfortunately, that appeal could not stop the rush to judgment; the building was demolished five days later, on May 23rd. By the time General Partin arrived in Oklahoma City, all that remained at the Murrah Building site was a mound of dirt and the stumps of the building's four corner columns. The thousands of tons of the building's rubble -- the primary forensic evidence in this "deadliest terrorist attack ever on American soil" -- had been buried in a landfill outside of town. That, however, did not prevent Partin from examining hundreds of photographs that had been taken of the crime scene in the various stages of the cleanup after the blast. The photographs, he told THE NEW AMERICAN, provide more than sufficient evidence to sustain his earlier misgivings about the case. They provide, says the general, undeniable proof that demolition charges had been used on four of the building's columns and that these, not the truck bomb, caused the massive structural damage on April 19th.

General Partin released this new evidence on July 13th in a 23-page report entitled ***Bomb Damage Analysis of Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma***. The report includes five 8 1/2" by 11" color photographs and a detailed diagram illustrating the potential blast impact of the truck bomb on the damaged building. (These graphics are reproduced throughout this article with the "tab" identification numbers used in the Partin report.)

Notwithstanding the fact that it has been completely ignored by the Establishment media, the general's report presents a very compelling case. The nature of the evidence and the cogency of his analysis, combined with his professional stature and distinguished career, make the general's charges difficult to dismiss. General Partin's 31 years of active service in the Air Force include intensive research, design, testing, and management of weapons development at all levels and testing of all types of explosives. He commanded the Air Force Armament Technology Laboratory and was chairman of the joint services committee responsible for harmonization of air munitions requirements for the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps. General Partin was a Command Pilot and Command Missileman. He is a recipient of the Distinguished Service Medal and was thrice awarded the Legion of Merit.

In a diagram he made of the Murrah Building to accompany his May 18th letter to Congress (included in our June 26th story) General Partin had shown the damage due to the collapse of the reinforced concrete columns. The diagram showed that in the first row of columns facing the street where the truck bomb was parked (row A), seven columns (A2, A3, A4, A5, A6, A7, A8) collapsed, while in row B only column B3 failed. Unlike rows B and C, where all eleven columns ran from the ground floor to the top of the building, in row A the bases of the even numbered columns stood on a heavy reinforced concrete header -- or horizontal transfer beam -- which was supported at the third floor by the much larger odd-numbered columns.

Reflecting the information publicly available at the time and the official story that the truck bomb had been responsible for the building collapse, General Partin's original diagram placed the truck bomb in front of column A3, which allowed for the maximum penetration of the blast toward the failed B3 column and gave the greatest possible benefit of the doubt to the official scenario. Even so, the official scenario faced daunting inconsistencies and contradictions. "The total incompatibility with a single truck bomb," he wrote, "lies in the fact that either some of the columns collapsed that should not have collapsed or some of the columns are still standing that should have collapsed and did not." Indeed, it defies not only physics but common sense to suggest that a bomb blast would cause larger, stronger columns to collapse while not affecting smaller columns, or that it would leave standing columns that are closer and take out identical columns that are farther away.

Do You Believe in Magic?

Additional information now makes the general's already compelling case against the official explosion scenario even more convincing. "The truck bomb was not in front of column A3 as I had originally shown in my diagram," Partin has told THE NEWAMERICAN, "but instead, as the crater shows, about 15 feet out from columns A4 and A5 [see "Tab 2," page 5]. This means that the damage was even *more* asymmetrical, *more* at odds with the truck bomb explanation than I had originally stated. It means that column B4, which *did not* come down, would have received about 40 percent more impulse from the truck bomb's blast than B3, which *did* come down. If *any* columns were going to come down in the B row it would have been columns B4 and B5. *You don't have to go any further than that to know that you had a demolition charge on column B3 -- unless you believe in magic.*"

But "magic" aplenty there was -- if the reigning scenarists are to be believed. "If you look at those B row columns," says Partin, "you can see that they still have furring strips and sheetrock on them [see "Tab 4," page 7]. Down on the first and second floors some of the sheetrock and furring strips have been knocked off by the blast, but you see absolutely no spalling to those columns. You can see they were not even chipped or scratched. Now, you can't have the blast reaching clear in to column B3 and bringing down that heavy reinforced column and at the same time not even blowing off the light sheetrock covering from the adjacent B4 column. To suggest otherwise is ludicrous."

Moreover, he observes, if the blast from the truck bomb were responsible for collapsing the support columns, one would expect the columns and header to be blown inward. But that is not the case. "The header and the A row columns went straight down; they were not blown into the building," says Partin. "Column B3 also went straight down. This is consistent with demolition charges." Indeed, we saw the same kind of straight-down collapse when the building was imploded on May 23rd.

According to General Partin, very little of the structural damage sustained on April 19th was actually caused by the truck bomb. He re-emphasizes a crucial point that he has stressed many times before and that he believes most people fail to grasp: Blast through air is a terribly inefficient coupling mechanism against heavy reinforced concrete beams and columns; blast impulse -- and its potential for damage -- drops dramatically when traveling through air, initially falling off more rapidly than an inverse function of the distance cubed. Even though the Oklahoma City truck bomb made an enormous impulse wave, it is wrong, he says, to be overly impressed and to attribute a force to that explosion which it clearly did not have.

"Using the official estimate usually cited for the amount of explosive in the truck bomb -- 4,800 pounds -- would yield a sphere of ammonium nitrate about 41/2 feet in diameter with a pressure of explosion of about 1/2 million pounds per square inch at detonation -- and that's being generous," says the general. "But by the time the blast wave travels through the air to the nearest of the columns in the A row (A5) it dropped off to about 375 pounds of pressure per square inch, and by the time it reaches the nearest B row columns it's down in the range of 27 to 38 [pounds per square inch]. And out at column A7 it's down around 25 to 35 pounds per square inch. The yield strength of concrete is around 3,500 pounds per square inch, and yet we're supposed to believe that this large, reinforced concrete column is going to be brought down by 25 to 35 pounds of pressure? It's absurd."

Added Evidence

However, as persuasive as this evidence may be, there is still much more. General Partin points out that in most photos of the Murrah Building one can plainly see column A9 still standing with the header beam broken off before A8, leaving a cantilever of almost 20 feet. The collapse of column A7 left a cantilever of 40 feet (20 feet from A7 to A8, plus 20 feet from A8 to A9); when the floors above came down they snapped off the cantilever near A8 between A8 and A9. The end of the cantilevered concrete header is rough and jagged, consonant with breakage due to the downward force of the tons of falling debris (see "Tab 5," page 20). The photographic evidence, however, shows (see "Tab 8," page 26) that at the juncture of the fallen beams near column A7 there is a failure that is smooth and rounded, what Partin says is unmistakably the work of "a high-energy explosive in contact with that structural member."

The photos show that the thick concrete header beam (about 3 feet by 5 feet) came down in three 40-foot sections, with the same kind of failures at its junction with A3, A5, A7, and, as previously mentioned, a fourth section of some 20 feet that broke off near A8. Anyone familiar with explosive effects on concrete, says Partin, "would see immediately that these were failures caused by contact explosive charges" and not structural fractures due to the shock wave from the truck bomb. If the shock wave from the truck blast had been strong enough to

collapse the columns -- and, as we have seen, it was not -- the fractures would be jagged, like the end of the cantilevered header. But they are not. General Partin explains: "When a high-energy explosive charge is detonated in contact with a reinforced concrete structure, the wave of deformation travels through the concrete, pulverizing it and turning it to sand, stripping it away from the steel reinforcement bars. That's what we see here in each of these cases, at the junctures of the header and columns A3, A5, and A7, and at B3. The failures are relatively clean and smooth, obviously produced by explosives in contact with the junctures."

At each of the junctures the concrete has been turned to sand -- extending along the header about two feet on either side of the juncture, and a foot to a foot-and-a-half below the juncture on the columns. The steel reinforced rods stick out exposed for about three feet (see "Tab 6," "Tab 7," and "Tab 8").

Inside Access

In his May 18th letter to Congress and in his earlier interview with THE NEW AMERICAN General Partin pointed out that it would not have been difficult to place explosive charges at the bases of the columns in row A since that row is accessible from the street. However, as we have seen, the charges were not placed at the column bases, but at the juncture of the odd-numbered A columns and the header. This means they were not placed at the street level -- which could have been done from the outside -- but on the third floor. Which means the bomber(s) had to have access to the inside of the building.

This, of course, casts a whole new light on the bombing. And a very disturbing and sinister light at that, since it implies an "inside job," and makes it very difficult to pin the blame solely on the individual, or individuals, who positioned the truck bomb. It virtually necessitates the involvement of individuals who had normal access to the building. "You just don't walk in off the street through security with explosives like this," says Partin.

This doesn't mean, ipso facto, as some overzealous critics have charged, that the FBI, ATF, DEA, Janet Reno, Bill Clinton, Louis Freeh or any other similarly high officials planned and perpetrated this atrocity. Such conclusions reach beyond the scope of the evidence available at this time. However, it is no more of a reach than we have witnessed in the pathetic attempts by portside politicians, editorialists, and reporters to confect a gigantic "right-wing" conspiracy to blame for the nefarious act.

The tendency by some on the right to lean on the trigger before clearing leather is more than matched by the penchant of those on the left reflexively to reject out of hand any and all evidence -- no matter how solid -- which conflicts with the official line that a single truck bomb planted by vicious right-wing extremists was responsible for the devastating explosion. Unfortunately, Clintonistas are not the

only ones afflicted with this bias; "respectable" Republicans and "acceptable" conservatives also have been preconditioned to spout the line and to dismiss as dangerous and wacky any evidence pointing toward explosives inside the building or the possible involvement of government agents in the deadly blast.

However, Partin cannot be written off as a militia misfit or a UFO nut case, and the evidence he marshals stands on its own strength. Furthermore, other credible authorities endorse his thesis.

Corroborating Opinions

Among the explosives experts interviewed by THE NEW AMERICAN who subscribe to General Partin's analysis are professional civilian demolitionists, scientists, and bomb specialists who currently serve, or previously served, in military and police units.

Sam Gronning, a licensed, professional blaster in Casper, Wyoming with 30 years experience in explosives, told us the Partin letter "states in very precise technical terms what everyone in this business knows: No truck bomb of ANFO [ammonium nitrate fuel oil] out in the open is going to cause the kind of damage we had there" in Oklahoma City. "In 30 years of blasting, using everything from 100 percent nitrogel to ANFO, I've not seen anything to support that story."

Gronning notes that he recently detonated an ANFO charge more than three times the size of the one reportedly responsible for the Oklahoma destruction. "I set off 16,000 pounds of ANFO and was standing upright just 1,000 feet away from the blast," and even a bomb that size would not have caused the destruction experienced in the April 19th explosion, he said.

Dr. Rodger Raubach, who took his PhD in physical chemistry and served on the research faculty at Stanford University, says, "General Partin's assessment is absolutely correct. I don't care if they pulled up a Semi-trailer truck with 20 tons of ammonium nitrate; it wouldn't do the damage we saw there."

Raubach, who is the technical director of a chemical company, explained to THE NEW AMERICAN that "the detonation velocity of the shock wave from an ANFO explosion is on the order of 3,500 meters per second. In comparison, military explosives generally have detonation velocities that hit 7,000 to 8,000-plus meters per second. Things like TNT have a detonation velocity of about 7,100 meters per second. The most energetic single-component explosive of this type, C-4 or RDX, is about 8,000 meters per second and above. You don't start doing big-time damage to heavy structures until you get into those ranges, which is why the military uses those explosives."

Dramatic Drop. Off

Several qualified experts we interviewed, however, took issue with the general's assessment. Jim Redyke, a demolition expert from Tulsa, Oklahoma, has imploded hundreds of buildings and was a consultant at the Oklahoma City bomb site. Redyke told THE NEW AMERICAN that "this was consistent with the kind of damage [one would expect] from this size of bomb."

An Army Special Forces officer with explosives experience seconded this opinion, mentioning that nearly identical damage was done in the two 1983 Lebanon incidents, in which truck bombs were used to collapse the U.S. Marine barracks and the U.S. embassy.

Responding to these critiques, General Partin observed that it is not surprising that even many people with a professional knowledge of explosives might be unduly impressed with the size and explosive wallop of the bomb and fail to reckon with the fundamental laws of physics. "Yes, this was a big bomb with a big blast," agreed General Partin. "But most people fail to appreciate how inefficient a blast is in air and how dramatically its destructive potential drops off just a few feet from the explosion. In the Lebanon barracks bombing, the truck was driven directly under the building so that the explosion had maximum effectiveness against a much lower building with much smaller columns."

Demolitionists, Partin pointed out, rarely deal with the size of explosive charge used in the Oklahoma City truck bomb. "They use a couple hundred pounds of explosive that may be distributed among dozens -- or hundreds -- of small charges detonating microseconds or milliseconds apart." Those charges placed directly on, or in, a structure, "propagate a wave of deformation of nearly a million pounds per square inch that pulverizes concrete, which has a yield strength of only about 3,500 pounds per square inch." But if you put just a few feet of air between the explosive and the target, the blast wave quickly drops from nearly a million pounds per square inch to hundreds of pounds per square inch. It still makes an impressive boom, but has very little effect on heavy reinforced concrete.

It was this fact of physics which occupied much of Partin's attention in weapons development for the U.S. Armed Forces and made him an untiring crusader for the development and deployment of precision-guided munitions. General Partin cites accounts of the many laboratory and field tests he ran using large-yield bombs on numerous structures and targets. That experience, he says, together with all the known history of modern warfare shows that bombs can detonate close to a hard structure without causing severe destruction.

One argument offered by a nationally prominent demolition expert we interviewed who disagreed with the multiple explosion thesis turned out to provide not only an interesting insight into human psychology, but a strong (though unintended) affirmation, of sorts, for the general's position. "But if there were [explosive] charges planted inside the building, that would indicate complicity by [agents of]

the government," he commented, "and I just can't believe that."
THE NEW AMERICAN received a similar remark from another explosives specialist, indicating that when it comes to confronting unpleasant realities, even some who are accustomed to dealing with "just the facts" may allow emotions to lead.

Compounding Evidence

An inside bombing is consistent not only with the aforementioned evidence and explosives experience, but with other facts in the case as well. "You probably recall seeing the broadcast [on April 19th] in which a reporter from Channel 4 television in Oklahoma City is interviewing an official after the blast who is explaining that a bomb squad has just defused one undetonated bomb and is in the process of disarming another," says General Partin. Yes, we do recall, as do millions of others, no doubt. And we have it on videotape. Subsequent "official" statements explained that what had actually been discovered turned out to be ATF "training aids." To General Partin, such explanations are cut from the same deceptive cloth as the official scenarios which are being used to obfuscate and contradict the plain facts of this horrendous crime. The "dummy bomb" reports, he says, "impute either the highest stupidity to the bomb technicians -- since training aids are *a/ways* clearly labeled as such -- or gross, gross incompetence on the part of the ATF for not marking the devices as 'training aids' in the first place."

Yet another significant piece of evidence against the "single truck bomb" theory is the structural integrity of the remainder of the building after the explosion. A single bomb blast large enough to cause the destruction we saw there would also cause considerable structural damage to the rest of the building. That, however, was not the case. Architects and structural engineers involved with the building told THE NEW AMERICAN that emotional and political factors, not technical and safety factors, guided the decision to demolish the building.

Architect Ed Kirkpatrick arrived at the Murrah Building shortly after the April 19th explosion and was one of the main structural safety consultants in the early phases of the rescue effort. Most of the building was, in his opinion, structurally sound and worth restoring. "I thought they were much too hasty in bringing it down," he told THE NEW AMERICAN. Jim Loftis, the architect who designed the award-winning building, also agreed that the structure was sound and could be restored. "I think technologically we could have removed the damaged part of the building and rebuilt it, and I was for that," he said in an interview with THE NEW AMERICAN. "But I've come to see that emotionally it might not have worked; it might be too difficult for the employees to work again at the same building."

The structural integrity of the Murrah Building after the blast buttresses the evidence that explosives other than the truck bomb were involved in this crime. It

is consistent with the use of demolition charges which produce very precise, localized damage. It also points to the conclusion that the decision to destroy the building was based on political considerations, not on professional, technical expertise. Demolition of the building was not essential to "public safety," as the politicians alleged.

Demolition, especially a very hurried demolition, was essential though to bury the evidence. General Partin visited the BFI Waste Systems landfill outside Oklahoma City recently where the Murrah Building rubble was taken. He had originally thought that the materials would have been laid out for investigation, as one would expect in a case of this importance, involving such great loss of life and such serious national security implications. Far from it. Although much of the debris was initially deposited on the parking lot and the grounds of the Oklahoma County Sheriff's Department Training Center for examination, it is now buried. The landfill is surrounded by a chain link fence and, when the general visited the site, was guarded by security personnel. "This," says General Partin, "is a classic coverup of immense proportions."

Considering the enormity of the crime committed, the rancorous political debate and furious legislative activity it has produced, and the extensive media coverage that has been lavished on some of the most trivial minutiae of this case, the near-total blackout of General Partin's highly credible analysis is nothing short of amazing. The same media jackals who, in the wake of Oklahoma City, have swarmed all over rural American communities in desperate search of right-wing bogeymen to fit their perfervid preconceptions, cannot be bothered by common sense, facts, and solid evidence.

It may be that the general's assessment will be proven to be way off; perhaps other equally qualified experts will be found to adequately answer the critical objections he raises. If that is the case, so be it. So far, however, the prostitute press and pusillanimous politicians have sought to stifle his persuasive arguments with stonewalled silence. And, ignoring his compelling evidence, they continue cynically to exploit the fears they have fanned since the Oklahoma bombing to push so-called "anti-terrorist" legislation that seriously threatens the liberty of all Americans.

Yes, "cover-up" and "burying the evidence" have taken on new meaning since Oklahoma City. And for all the righteous blather about "bringing to justice" those responsible for this heinous act, so far there appears to be no one in Congress, the government, or the major media with the courage, integrity, and resolve to take the risks involved in assuring that true justice is not trampled and that the real criminals do not get away -- literally -- with murder.