

Searching for John Doe No. 2

by William F. Jasper

The April 19th bombing that took the lives of 168 men, women, and children in Oklahoma City stunned the nation and the world, both with its explosive magnitude and its senseless, murderous intensity. It also left in its wake many troubling questions concerning contradictory "facts" in the case, conflicting reports, wild rumors, bungled investigations, destruction of evidence, vital leads not followed, and important eyewitnesses and testimony ignored.

THE NEW AMERICAN has been investigating scores of these disturbing incongruities, pursuing hundreds of leads, and conducting numerous interviews. Although most of these lines of investigation are far from resolved, a number have developed sufficiently to warrant reporting at this time.

Mideast Connection

In the immediate aftermath of the deadly blast, the liberal media indulged in a frenzy of accusation and speculation, pointing the finger of blame at "right-wing extremists," "Waco fanatics," "militias," or "Arab terrorists."

The fact that the April 19th date of the bombing coincided with the anniversary of the Waco inferno should not have been overlooked by law enforcement investigators, of course. The coincidence of the attack with the recent conviction of four Islamic sect members in the World Trade Center bombing and the extradition of another from Pakistan also provided more than sufficient cause for investigation of a possible Mideast connection. Legitimate investigation, yes; media persecution, prosecution, conviction, and execution, no.

Due to public backlash against the obviously unfair media treatment, much of liberalism and the fourth estate was soon back-pedaling -- but *only* with regard to their blatant anti-Arab bias. Conservatives, talk show hosts, "gun nuts," militias, pro-life activists, and other politically incorrect miscreants, on the other hand, were -- and still *are* -- fair game for blame and vilification.

In a Rose Garden appearance on April 20th, President Clinton appeared to be the voice of reason, warning against unfounded conclusions that the bombers may be connected to the Middle East. "I ask the American people not to jump to conclusions," he said. "This is not a question of anybody's religion We should not stereotype anybody." Striking a resolute pose, he asserted: "Let me say again, those responsible will be brought to justice. They will be tried, convicted, and punished."

Strong words. Comforting words. But *empty* words, according to investigators, news reporters, and bombing victims in Oklahoma City who have been pointing out a glaring blind spot in the official government investigation. No place to hide? Hardly. These researchers claim that prime suspects in the bombing, including the elusive "John Doe No. 2," are openly walking the streets of Oklahoma City -- with apparent immunity from federal investigators and prosecutors. Two Middle Eastern men -- identified by some witnesses as Iraqis -- who have been tied to bombing suspect Timothy McVeigh, are inexplicably being "let off the hook," the critics charge.

Yes, it sounds like supermarket tabloid sensationalism; but the sources are credible and the evidence they cite is very compelling. It also comports more closely and consistently with evidence in the official investigation than does the publicly released conclusion of the official investigation itself.

Early Leads

Investigative reporters for Channel 4-KFOR, Oklahoma City's NBC-TV affiliate, have doggedly pursued a number of important "Mideast connection" leads and have turned up some startling results. In a June 7th report kicking off a series of stories on the subject, KFOR replayed an "all points bulletin" from the Oklahoma City Police radio band which had been broadcast to millions of listeners shortly after the bombing. The APB told law enforcement officers to be on the lookout for a "late model, almost new, Chevrolet, full-size pickup. It will be brown in color with tinted windows, smoke-colored bug deflector on the front of the pickup." The APB also stated that the vehicle was occupied by "Two Mideastern males, 25 to 28 years of age, six feet tall, athletic build, dark hair and a beard...."

KFOR news reporter Jayna Davis told viewers during the station's June 7th newscast:

Sources tell us the FBI canceled that all points bulletin for the brown pickup just hours after it was issued, refusing to say why and demanding that it not be rebroadcast.

Little attention has been paid to the brown pickup, although the FBI has confirmed to us that the vehicle may still be connected to the April 19th attack. We've been investigating the mysterious brown pickup ourselves. The trail of that pickup has led us to direct connections to Timothy McVeigh in the very heart of Oklahoma City. Four sources have confirmed the truck which matches the FBI description was seen on several occasions in the days before the bombing in a north-west Oklahoma City business. An employee of that business is this man [video footage of a man with facial identity blocked out] who law enforcement officers agree with us strongly resembles the FBI sketches of John Doe Number 2.

We know who he is, but we can't show you his face at this time because he has not been arrested or charged. However, we have eyewitnesses who identified him in the company of Timothy McVeigh just days before the blast and just a few miles away from the Murrah Building.

One of the Channel 4 witnesses is a waitress who was interviewed by the KFOR news team at the downtown Oklahoma City bar where she works. According to her testimony, she saw Timothy McVeigh buying drinks for a man strongly resembling John Doe No. 2. When shown surveillance photos of the "possible John Doe No. 2" that KFOR had been trailing, she positively identified him as the "drinking buddy" of McVeigh. Asked if she would testify to that before a grand jury under oath, she answered, "Yes."

The woman also stated that the man had spoken to her in broken English and that his speech reminded her of the television interviews with people from Iraq during the Persian Gulf War.

In another interview during the same KFOR newscast, three women who work in a store in the vicinity of the bar stated that McVeigh and two other men had come into their shop twice: on April 14th and again on April 17th, just two days before the bombing. They said that all three of the men were speaking to one another in a foreign language. "They spoke in a foreign language," said one of the women in the news report. "They huddled together and they all three spoke secretly to one another, and it was a foreign language."

In subsequent episodes in the series, KFOR interviewed additional witnesses. One was a restaurant owner in the same area who says he served McVeigh and a John Doe No. 2 look-alike who he thought was probably an employee of McVeigh. The restaurant owner said the relationship appeared to him "like a contractor coming by and buying his [hired] hand a lunch or something. It's the impression I had."

Down the street, a pawn shop owner also identified McVeigh as having visited his store on April 14th and 17th. He bought CDs, the owner told KFOR's Brad Edwards, and was accompanied by two other men. "It had to be McVeigh," he said.

Still another eyewitness who has recently come forward works at a tire store on tenth and Hudson, several blocks from the Murrah Building. This witness says that on the morning of April 19th Timothy McVeigh stopped at the tire shop. McVeigh got out of a Ryder truck, he says, and asked him for directions. Accompanying McVeigh, says this witness, was a man fitting both the FBI sketch and the KFOR photos of John Doe No. 2. A short time later the explosion ripped through the federal building.

Apparently there is another connection linking Channel 4's "possible John Doe No. 2" to the individual described by the FBI as a prime suspect on April 20th. According to Jayna Davis, KFOR's investigators have "confirmed that this man has a tattoo on his upper left arm," again matching the description of the elusive suspect released by the FBI.

KFOR made a much more stunning revelation, however, when Davis reported: "In fact, we know that the possible John Doe No. 2 is Iraqi. Sources tell us he served in the Iraqi military under Saddam Hussein in the Gulf War."

THE NEW AMERICAN has not yet been able to independently verify the Iraqi nationality and military record of KFOR's "possible John Doe No. 2," nor have we been able to conclusively prove that he is indeed the suspect initially sought by the FBI or mentioned in the police APB. This much, however, we do know:

- Besides the sources cited above, additional witnesses -- some of whom we have interviewed -- will soon be coming forward.
- There is indeed a John Doe No. 2 reliably tied to McVeigh and the McVeigh Ryder truck.
- John Doe No. 2 has been credibly identified by numerous witnesses as being of Middle Eastern extraction.
- The Clinton Administration's Justice Department seems intent on ignoring and misrepresenting the evidence of a possible Mideast connection.
- The same Justice Department appears equally intent on allowing John Doe No. 2 and other possible co-conspirators to "take a walk."

Going Nowhere

On June 14th, the U.S. Department of Justice "cleared" John Doe No. 2 with a press release saying "an individual" -- identified by sources as Private Todd Bunting, a soldier from Fort Riley, Kansas -- who resembled the John Doe No. 2 sketch, "has been interviewed" by the FBI and determined to be "not connected with the bombing."

Newspapers and television broadcasts featured photos of Bunting and retailed the story that perhaps John Doe No. 2 had been a phantom from the start, the result of "misidentification and confusion." According to this line, the employees at Elliott's Body Shop, the Ryder dealership in Junction City, Kansas, who had provided the descriptions used by FBI artists to draw the composites of John Doe No. 1 (McVeigh) and John Doe No. 2, had become confused by two separate events; they had somehow mistakenly associated McVeigh with Bunting, who reportedly had visited the rental agency on another day.

The ***Dallas Morning News*** quoted an unnamed federal official as saying, "Periodically, you just get something in an investigation that goes nowhere. John Doe No. 2 goes nowhere. It doesn't show up in associations, it doesn't show up in phone calls. It doesn't show up among the Army buddies of McVeigh. With McVeigh, on the other hand, there's a lot of corroboration." ***USA Today*** quoted a former FBI official who said, "I'm starting to wonder if he exists, if he wasn't a red herring."

Those who have been following these developments closely and who are familiar with the numerous witness accounts are beginning to wonder if the Justice Department might want John Doe No. 2 to "go nowhere" and if it is in the process of pulling off a complete disappearing act for this "most wanted" fugitive. There are, of course, some major problems with the Justice Department's position. First of all, there appears to be no confusion among the Ryder rental people over John Doe No. 2 and Bunting. Although the Ryder dealership owner, Eldon Elliott, and his employees have shunned all media contact, according to friends and relatives they are "downright adamant" that McVeigh was accompanied by John Doe No. 2, and it was not Bunting. The accuracy of the McVeigh sketch and the numerous eyewitnesses who have identified the suspect in the John Doe No. 2 sketch argue in favor of the reliability of the memories of the Ryder people.

Among the people interviewed by THE NEW AMERICAN during our investigation in Junction City, Kansas was an employee of the Great Western Inn, which is located just a couple of miles from the Ryder rental agency and about a mile down the road from the Dreamland motel where Timothy McVeigh stayed April 14th through the 17th.

The clerk, who requested anonymity because of security concerns, stated that on the evening of April 17th a man fitting the description of John Doe No. 2 and driving a Ryder truck rented a room from her. "I didn't like him," she said. "I usually like to talk to customers but there was something about him; he looked down, not in your eyes, and was very nervous. He mumbled and I had to ask him several times for [registration] information." He spoke with a foreign accent and she remembered that she "asked him to spell his name because it was foreign sounding." On June 17th she was quoted in a press account as having dismissed any possibility that Bunting was the man she had rented to. "I bet there's a third guy that looks like John Doe," she said. "But it's not him [Bunting] -- that's for sure." Asked if the "John Doe No. 2" she rented to resembled Bunting, she replied, "Heck no. I've never seen that guy [Bunting] until tonight."

Other witnesses are equally certain that they could not have mistaken Bunting for the John Doe No. 2 suspect they had identified. Although Bunting may more nearly resemble the fugitive sketch than Terry Nichol's 12-year-old son Josh -- certainly one of the more patently bizarre official theories -- trying to write off John Doe No. 2 on the basis of the Bunting "link" strains all credulity. In Junction City we interviewed four people who had seen Timothy McVeigh during his stay

at the Dreamland motel. Three of those witnesses state that they also saw Terry Nichols at the same motel visiting McVeigh. Two of those witnesses also identified John Doe No. 2 with McVeigh and the Ryder truck at the Dreamland.

Grief and Resolve

"I'm furious that obvious leads and connections aren't being investigated and that all Mideast links and John Doe No. 2 references are being intentionally ignored," says Glenn Wilburn, who has amassed an impressive collection of primary source data on John Doe 2. He has interviewed many of the witnesses who appeared on the KFOR broadcast series, as well as many others.

Wilburn, an Oklahoma City certified public accountant, has very strong personal reasons for pursuing his own investigation: His two grandsons, Chase and Colton Smith, ages three and two, were among the victims murdered in the Murrah Building explosion. The two boys lived with their grandparents and their mother, Edye Smith, who is Wilburn's daughter. "They were more like my very own sons," Wilburn told THE NEW AMERICAN, "and I can't and won't stand idly by if some of their murderers -- for whatever reasons, and I don't know what they might be -- are allowed to get off."

It became clear to him, Wilburn says, that the investigation was heading in exactly that direction when officials began indicating they were dropping the hunt for John Doe No. 2 and would probably only indict Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols as the main co-conspirators in the bombing. Wilburn's concerns were confirmed when on Thursday, August 10th, indictments on capital charges were handed down for McVeigh and Nichols -- along with an indictment on lesser charges for McVeigh's Army buddy Michael Fortier -- while John Doe No. 2 was allowed to fade further into the past.

"I may be forced to eat my words," says Wilburn, "and I would gladly do so if I'm proved wrong, but i've said, and continue to say: The FBI is either the most incompetent law enforcement agency in America, or they're deceiving us. I'm convinced the FBI is operating under directions from Washington -- from the Justice Department -- that no Mideast connection is supposed to be uncovered."

"How else do you explain it?" he continues. "If a little CPA like myself and a few friends can turn up all this evidence, surely the mighty FBI with all its investigators, laboratories, and resources can do as much." Wilburn cites numerous examples of what he terms either incompetence or deceit: John Doe No. 2 witnesses whose names were provided to the FBI but who were never contacted by investigators; witnesses who were interviewed by the FBI but were never shown photos or sketches of John Doe 2 or asked to identify him; witnesses who claim the FBI investigators appeared uninterested in any John Doe No. 2 information; and witnesses who were instructed by the FBI not to talk to anybody about what they had seen.

Obstruction of Justice?

Defense attorneys for Nichols and McVeigh have also charged the FBI with advising witnesses not to talk with them, a charge which the Bureau has denied. THE NEW AMERICAN has also encountered witnesses who assert that FBI investigators told them not to talk to the press, the defense, or anyone, for that matter, concerning things they may have witnessed connected to the explosion or the suspects. If this represents standard operating procedure of FBI investigators in this case, obviously there is justifiable cause for concern about obstruction of justice. Since the FBI has had hundreds of agents canvassing most of the prime investigation areas, there are, potentially, scores -- if not hundreds -- of witnesses who might never be heard from because they may have been "silenced." In fairness, however, we must report that not all witness accounts are so discouraging. Some witnesses have informed us that their FBI interviewers assured them that "it's a free country" and that they had every right to discuss their information with whomever they wished.

"I'm concerned," says Glenn Wilburn, "that the Clinton Administration is so intent on pinning this on the militias that they are going to completely bury the obvious Mideast connection." He and others in Oklahoma point out that in 1993 and 1994 President Clinton brought thousands of Iraqi POWs -- many of them reportedly Saddam Hussein's soldiers who had fought against us in Desert Storm -- to the U.S. for "resettlement." Many of them came to Oklahoma. At the time, Mr. Clinton's policy was vigorously opposed by the Veterans of Foreign Wars and many members of Congress. A "Sense of the Senate" resolution sponsored by Senator John Warner (R-VA) calling on Mr. Clinton to halt the program passed the Senate by a voice vote in September 1993.

Members of Congress trying to find out details of the resettlement were rebuffed by the State Department. However, on October 18, 1993 the *Washington Times* reported: "More than 3,400 Iraqis -- ex-soldiers, their dependents and others -- have been settled in the United States. Another 4,600 are expected this year. The relocations are scheduled to continue through 1994."

According to some witnesses in Oklahoma, John Doe No. 2 is one of those Iraqis brought to the U.S. last year under President Clinton's post-Desert Storm resettlement plan.