



AMATEURS & ASSASSINS:
Feds' Bungling At Ruby Ridge Exposed

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V. Valengurin/Pressens Bild

BOMBAST, BOMB BLASTS & BALONEY



SOF Explodes OKC Bombing Conspiracies

Text & Photos by Richard Sherrow



The headline screamed at me in the check-out lane of the grocery store: *THE WACO CONNECTION — Terror Plot Revealed In Bar Hours Before Killer Blast*. It was emblazoned across the front page of that paragon of journalistic integrity, the *National Enquirer*.

It seems that the *Enquirer's* source, "a militia insider," was privy to a meeting of "Waco fanatics" in the Waco, Texas, Holiday Inn bar the night of 19 April 1995, when they detailed their secret revenge plot for the Mount Carmel holocaust two years earlier. The militia "eyewitness" recalled overhearing, "Tomorrow, God will have his vengeance on the ATF."

Wow, this was heavy stuff. Only one problem: I was in that very bar that very night, sipping beer and munching popcorn with *SOF* writer James L. Pate, Branch Davidian David Thibodeau and some other good folks. We closed down the place. The whole night, we heard no secret plot being discussed around us. Sorry *Enquirer*, no cigar.

Not to be outdone, a week later that beacon of virtual unreality, *The Spotlight*, unleashed its latest government conspiracy story: *FEDS FIB ON OKLAHOMA CITY BOMB SAYS EX-HIGH LEVEL FBI OFFICIAL: No Simple Fertilizer Bomb Caused Blast in Oklahoma*.

Spotlight editors must have reeled in ecstasy when presented with ex-FBI honcho Ted Gunderson's detailed description of the super-secret ninja bomb he claims is responsible for the destruction of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building. Dubbed the "Electrohydrodynamic Gaseous Fuel Device," a.k.a. the "Barometric Bomb," this Twilight Zone concoction is as bizarre in its description as it is scientifically unsound.

This story — but the latest in a long litany of conspiratorial conundrums routinely appearing in *The Spotlight* — soon became required reading nationwide among conspiracy groupies. As might be expected, the tale grew with each retelling, even to the point of the obligatory black helicopter being seen, by at least two "witnesses," hovering over the doomed federal building moments before the blast.

When any juicy conspiracy theory is subjected to the glaring light of scrutiny, there always are those who have made up their minds and will ignore bothersome facts. But here's a dose of reality anyway.

ANFO Chemistry Considered

Gunderson claims that his "facts" were provided to him by none other than the inventor of this nefarious device. In the glib words of his unnamed source, "ammonia [sic] nitrate has too much moisture to be effective...." Yet in his diagram of the so-called Barometric Bomb, he lists "Aqueous Amonium [sic] Nitrate" as the primary filler. *Aqueous* anything refers to a water-based solution. (Am I missing something here?) It gets better.

He goes on to state that even if someone knew what he was doing it would be "almost impossible to prepare it (the ammonium nitrate) with home mixing equipment" given the requirements for a 300-foot-tall "prill tower" and "huge process [sic] equipment." Well, no kidding. It does take a lot of equipment and a tall prill tower — to *manufacture* ammonium nitrate prill. But the fertilizer-grade ammonium nitrate one can buy at the garden shop already has been manufactured. All it takes

This remaining portion of the Murrah building was reduced to rubble with a few hundred pounds of properly placed explosives, and virtually no debris was blown from the area. Author found truck parts such as this transaxle gear (inset) blocks away — the result of a massive outward explosion, not multiple smaller charges placed internally.



The gist of Gen. Partin's theory is that properly located, multiple blasts would have been necessary to cause the devastation in Oklahoma City — that a rental truck wouldn't have carried enough to do the job. *SOF* investigators Pate and Sherrow found the truck's bumper 2-1/2 blocks from the blast site; this hardly suggests the blast was from cleverly placed, multiple charges.

to whip up an ANFO (ammonium nitrate/fuel oil) bomb is the elbow grease and time to mix up the raw materials.

Perhaps one of Gunderson's most laughable statements is, "The chances of a large quantity such as 4,800 pounds [of ammonium nitrate] detonating is slim." Nonsense. Does the name "Texas City" ring a bell? In 1947 two ships loaded with 9 million pounds of fertilizer-grade ammonium nitrate (and no fuel oil) caught fire and exploded in that Gulf coast port, killing 510 people and nearly leveling the town.

I personally worked on *Project Dice Throw* at White Sands Missile Range, New Mexico, in November 1976. Our initial shot consisted of 630 tons (1,260,000 pounds) of ANFO. For something that had a "slim chance of detonating," it left a hell of a hole in the ground. A side note: Ten minutes after the blast I took my explosive-ordnance disposal (EOD) team into the area to do a hazard assessment, and guess



Defying proven physical laws, the nine-pound "Gunderson Device" being promoted by some conspiracy theorists barely would have blown up the truck itself, let alone the Murrah building. But the 4,800 pounds of ANFO that probably were used rendered uninhabitable some 70 buildings — such as this one — within a several-block area.

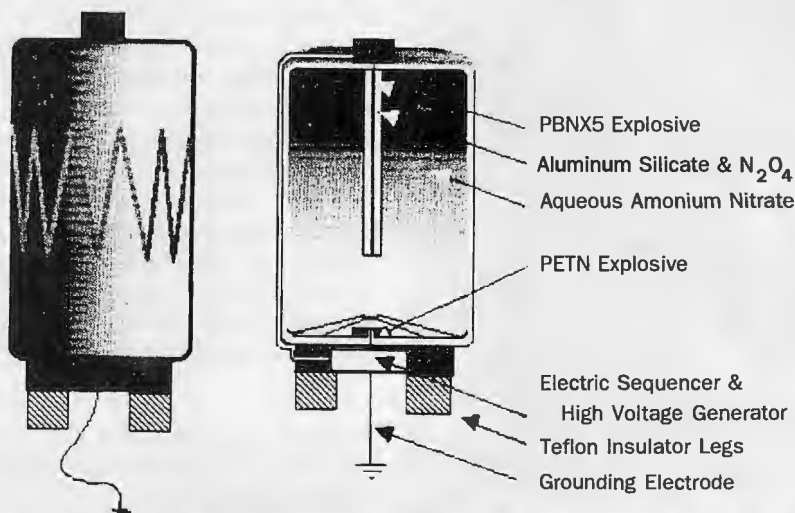
what? There were no "toxic nitric acid fumes" poisoning the air. So another persistent myth goes down in flames: Although nitric acid is used in the manufacture of ammonium nitrate, AN does not produce nitric acid when it explodes. Whoops again, guys. Funny thing: Depending on the conditions and environs of an AN explosion, some nitrous oxide (laughing gas) may be produced.

The BS about the "Barometric

Bomb" goes on and on in *The Spotlight's* report. (In short, it has even less credibility than Linda Thompson's flame-throwing tanks.) In an attempt to make this crock credible, Gunderson issues a challenge to "all the 'Bomb Experts' who doubt the verosity [sic] of this device" to research his "technical information."

I have 30 years in the business, and some credentials: expert witness in explosives, improvised explosive devices and arson in federal and state courts in nearly a third of this country; a multi-alumnus of the EOD

"Electro-hydrodynamic Gaseous Fuel Device"



The "Gunderson Device": Top-secret, leading-edge technology, or the toys-in-the-attic product of a hoaxer with a vivid imagination and a graphics package on his PC? Such frauds can gather strength like a tsunami until they break up on the shoreline of science. Unfortunately, by then they can have a life of their own.

School at Indian Head, Maryland; and a charter developer and instructor of the Hazardous Devices School at Redstone Arsenal, Alabama. I felt qualified to take up this challenge.

The 'Gunderson Device'

"Electro-hydrodynamic Gaseous Fuel Device" (a.k.a. "Barometric Bomb") — the name itself is an immediate red flag to anyone with a passing knowledge of the basics of improvised explosive devices. Let's

break down the name: electric-water pressure-gas device, or, air-pressure bomb. Say what? Going back to "Bombs Basic 101," we have hydro-static fuzes, which are found in depth bombs; they function by the increase of water pressure as the bomb sinks toward its submarine target, or detonates from the pressure wave of another underwater explosion. There is also the barometric fuze that functions by air pressure (same idea, different medium). "Barometric Bomb,"

though a nifty-sounding name, makes no sense.

Not content with one titillating title, Gunderson also refers to this dream machine as an "A-Nutronic [sic] device" that is only 9 inches long and a mere 2 inches in diameter. Perhaps he was trying to imply some far-out connection to a neutron bomb. Neutron weapons achieve their killing power not from their blast effect, but through a massive flux of neutron energy — which definitely did not occur in downtown Oklahoma City. It's an absolute fact that nothing anywhere near the tiny size described by Gunderson — except for a genuine nuclear device — could come close to causing the damage that occurred there. His "device" came from the mind of someone who has watched too many episodes of *Star Trek*. Neutron I've heard of, but "nutron"? Sorry Ted, your spelling is as bad as your science.

Speaking of correctness, let's examine some of the materials that make up this so-called "device." Only one of the explosives listed in this "bomb" sounds familiar: PETN (pentaerythrite tetranitrate). As for some of the others listed in the report, such as "PBNX5" and "PBNX5 Type 2" — there ain't no such animals. Could it be the storyteller got confused trying to spell PBX (plastic-bonded RDX, a.k.a. plastic-bonded explosive)? Even if this is the case, his brain trolley again jumps the track: In his density table he lists the two so-called PBNX5 explosives as having respective densities of 3.8 and 4.8 — a far cry from 1.71, the actual density of PBX. He erred again by assigning 1.00 as the density of "amonium" [sic] nitrate instead of the actual density of 1.725 for ammonium nitrate. Then he mentions "PDTN," another non-existent explosive. At first glance it seems he misspelled PETN, but this is hardly the case because he then comes up with a name for this mystery explosive, calling it "pentadirythri-tetra-nitrate." And lastly, we find aluminum silicate tossed into this enigmatic mix. An inert material, aluminum silicate reduces explosive power, it doesn't enhance it.

As for the "device" itself, *The Spotlight's* diagram looks like a cross

COVER-UPS

Theories of two blasts or secret ninja bombs aside, are the feds really being honest about the Oklahoma City bomb? With the public's nose sensitized by revelations at the Waco and Ruby Ridge hearings, the disturbing stench of a cover-up is wafting over that state capital as more facts are unearthed.

Do the feds know something they aren't telling? Did they have knowledge of the impending events in Oklahoma City and, as many are speculating, did they fumble the ball? Mounting evidence points to just that.

As James L. Pate reported in *"Bloody April"* (SOF August '95), an employee of the U.S. Public Health Service said a bomb threat had been received "a day or two" prior by the Housing and Urban Development office, located in the Murrah building. When confronted with this at a 20 April news conference, FBI Special Agent in Charge (now Deputy Director) Weldon Kennedy denied it. Since that time however, many significant discrepancies have appeared and questions arisen:

- An OKC Fire Department employee reported "very serious and credible" threats against the Murrah building, and other OKC targets, being ignored. Original 911 phone calls to the OKCFD were found to have been "recorded over" when requested by defense attorneys of the bombing suspects.
- Were a number of ATF agents out of the office that morning because they had been out all the previous night on an undercover "sting" operation?
- How many ATF personnel actually were assigned to the OKC office? On 19 April, an ATF spokesman told *The Daily Oklahoman* newspaper the ATF had 20 employees assigned there. Five weeks later, ATF Director John McGaw began an interview with CNN claiming the number was 15, but at the end of the interview he changed that number to 17. Still later, sources close to the investigation tell us ATF spokesman Lester Martz again has revised these figures, now claiming that three were in Ponca City, Oklahoma, for a trial; two were in the federal courthouse across the street in OKC; one was in an elevator in the Murrah building at the time of the blast; one was on the phone in the ATF office; and five were out all night on "surveillance." (Interestingly, we are told that information on this surveillance op since has "disappeared.")
- Was the ATF, DEA or any other agency illegally storing explosives in the Murrah building, as investigators close to the case have speculated in conversations with SOF? State Representative Charles Key considers this a possibility, and called for an independent investigation.
- Is the FBI keeping quiet about motel records and eyewitness accounts that indicate key suspect Timothy McVeigh was in Dayton, Ohio, at the same time he was allegedly committing an armed robbery in Arkansas?
- Why are federal agents still staking out Eldon Elliot's Ryder truck rental business in Junction City, Kansas, turning away any visitors who don't have "business" there?

These and many more questions require candid answers. As more develops in this case, SOF will be there getting those answers. Stay tuned.

— RLS

Continued on page 72

happiness and brotherhood. As an officer, I would like these relations to continue into the future. I have heard a lot about American Special Forces and I would like my platoon to take part in more American training."

"This will make things better and better," Kholodkor said, adding that he hoped soldiers will have only one mission in the future: "to prevent wars."

The Russians Are Coming?

But not everyone shared these feelings of brotherhood. Local militia members, concerned about a one-world government, were skeptical of having foreign troops in Louisiana.

To allay these concerns, Fort Polk issued a book about the Partnership for Peace exercise that noted: "Some may have heard rumors that Fort Polk is under U.N. command or part of some one-world order plot. This is not true."

Tom Parker, coordinator for the Louisiana militia, covered the exercise for his Louisiana public-access television show, "Freedom Forum." He remarked: "The Partnership for

Peace is forging a hammer. My concern is whether this hammer will be used as a tool for peace or as a weapon to smash our individual freedoms."

General John M. Shalikashvili, chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, has addressed some of these fears. He stressed that "what is important to understand is that the Partnership for Peace is not a partnership against someone. It is a partnership to draw us all together, to work together."

Exercises such as CN95, he said, "are checking out whether we're getting closer and closer together in the way we conduct our procedures."

"When armies from different nations get together," Shalikashvili said, "it's extraordinarily helpful if over time we have had these patterns of cooperation, opportunities where we get together, whether that's in our schools, whether that's in conferences, whether that's in exercises such as this, whether it's simply to get together and drink coffee together and get to know each other."

The Partnership for Peace, he said, "isn't just about exercises, it's about

the much larger issue of learning to live and work together and think the same way and understand each other clearly."

"You cannot wish away things that might go wrong in the world," he cautioned. "Humanitarian disasters will happen whether we like it or not. Peace will be broken and crises will arise that someone has to deal with. And if we do not wish to be the one who has to do it by himself all the time, then it is to our advantage to work with as many nations who can share the burden."

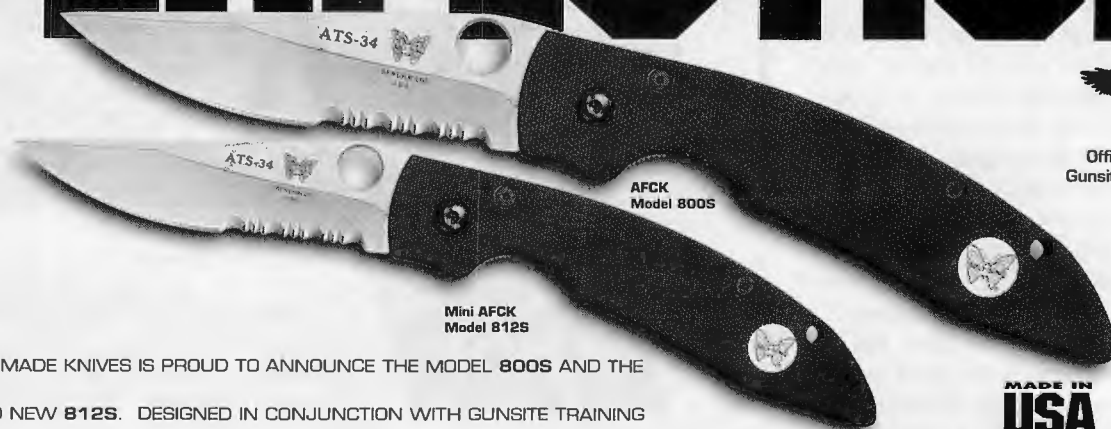
Freelancer Bill Pietrucha was formerly business correspondent for We/ Mbl, a Hearst-Izvestia joint-venture newspaper published in Russia and the United States, and associate editor of Defense News. ✕

BOMBAST

Continued from page 43

between a flashlight battery and a funky Fuel-Air Explosive (FAE) bomb. The description of how the

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Gunderson device supposedly functions sounds somewhat like the principle behind the FAE bomb: A highly volatile liquid (in the case of the FAE device it is normally propylene oxide) is released from its container by an initial explosion, allowing the fuel to mix with air and form a fuel-air vapor cloud; this cloud is initiated milliseconds later by explosive-cloud initiators. The resulting explosion forms a massive shock/pressure wave that destroys the target. A characteristic of an FAE bomb is that it leaves no crater. In Oklahoma City I observed a large crater, approximately 20 feet in diameter and 8 feet deep. So much for "explosive clouds."

Gunderson's article continues with malapropisms and techno-babble, such as the "Chapman Jugo" effect. I'm acquainted with the Chapman-Junguet theorem concerning explosive pressure waves, but "Chapman Jugo"? (Maybe this implies the Serbs had something to do with OKC.) While these ramblings may be very impressive to the uninitiated, his narrative flies in the face of very basic and thoroughly proven laws of physics.

To add to Gunderson's info, *The Spotlight* called in its usual "experts" to heighten the hype. Some of their "data" included the statement that PETN was a "low volume explosive." I'm familiar with high explosives (PETN is in this category) and low explosives; I know about high-order and low-order detonations; but "low volume explosive"?

The Spotlight

The Spotlight's sources also tell us about the mysterious "Q" security clearance that supposedly is necessary for access to "portable nuclear bombs." Nice try guys, but gaining access to information concerning *any* nuclear weapon requires a Top Secret clearance with CNWDI (Critical Nuclear Weapons' Design Information) access.

In keeping with its tradition of rhetoric, *The Spotlight* reported, "The most astounding effect of this type of detonation is the immediate atmospheric over pressure which has a tendency to blow out windows [of] any structure within the vicinity of the blast." Considering that an over pres-

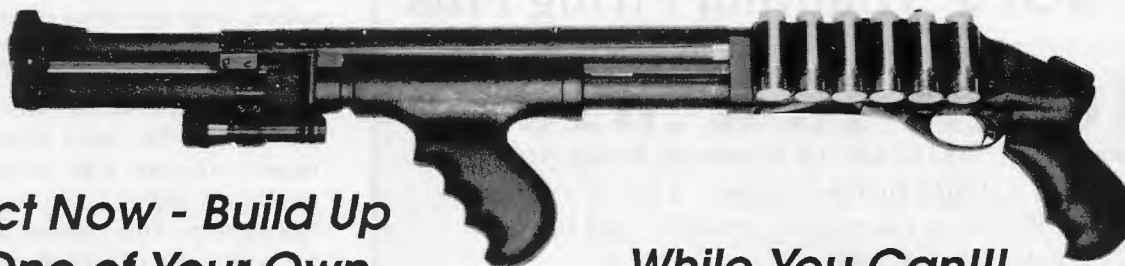
sure of only 0.15 p.s.i. will blow out windows, just about any type explosion of anything (even a bag of Pillsbury flour) is capable of this "astounding" feat. Cribbing nifty-sounding words and phrases out of a textbook does not an explosives expert make.

The General Partin Report

In July, retired Air Force Brigadier General Benton K. Partin put forth his version of the Oklahoma City bombing. As did Gunderson, Partin also hints at an "inside job." Likewise, he flatly rejects the notion that a single truck bomb possibly could have caused the destruction that occurred. Although the general appears to have better technical credentials than Gunderson, and at least seems knowledgeable in the area of explosives *theory*, his calculations nonetheless appear to be based purely on hypotheticals rather than real-world explosive behavior.

He states that a blast pressure wave of 375 p.s.i. would be insufficient to destroy reinforced concrete columns. To the contrary: Over pressures of 30

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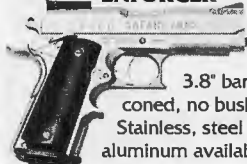
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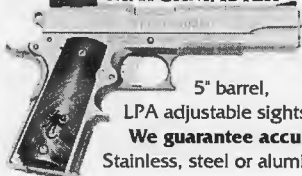


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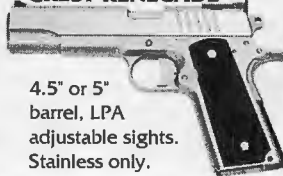
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p.s.i. are quite capable of causing failure of such columns (pressures as low as 8 p.s.i. will overturn loaded rail cars). Having had extensive experience in blowing very large (3- and 4-foot thick) reinforced concrete structures, I also take exception to the general's descriptions of the signature of contact explosives on such targets.

One of the key items of analysis apparently overlooked by both Partin and Gunderson is collateral damage. If you only stare at the trees you'll never see the forest.

In assessing any explosion scene it is imperative that damage to structures surrounding the target be carefully examined before any conclusions are reached. Accordingly, one of the first things I did upon arrival in Oklahoma City was to take a long walk with *SOF's* Pate through a 20-block area around the Murrah building, examining and photographing blast damage and speaking to many witnesses. It soon was apparent that almost no one had taken the time to do what we were doing.

Another crucial phenomenon associated with explosions — especially very large ones — which was completely overlooked by both Partin and Gunderson, is the negative blast-pressure wave. During an explosive detonation, large quantities of expanding gases are forced outward in the form of a positive-pressure wave. This creates a vacuum behind them. As the pressure of this wave dissipates, a negative-pressure wave is formed by gases (and debris) being sucked into this vacuum. This negative wave often is powerful enough to cause additional damage, in some cases finishing off what had just been weakened by the positive wave.

Basic laws of physics, as they relate to explosions, also must be considered; for instance, the effect of *focusing*. As the shock wave moves from the point of detonation, it may be directed or channeled by terrain, buildings or building interiors. Because of this, the localized energy/destructive force may increase or decrease proportionally. If the shock wave is deflected by an object, anything behind that object may be shielded from blast effects. Likewise, shock waves that strike a strong structure may reflect off that object, causing damage "around corners."

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Finally, neither Gunderson nor Partin gave any credit to a very powerful factor, something that contributes immensely to the loss of life in earthquakes, something architects give great consideration to when designing buildings, something explosives engineers study when preparing to demolish those buildings. It is a force that affects almost everything we do: gravity.

From the day the Murrah building was erected, the relentless force of gravity was trying to bring it down. On April 19, the force of gravity got the chance it needed when the explosion kicked out the supports from beneath the building. Gravity took over and the blast-weakened structure literally pulled itself down. John Donovan, *SOF's* contributing editor for explosives and demolitions (whose profession is blasting such buildings into neat piles of scoopable rubble), observed: "Such buildings are designed to withstand pressure from above. Even a relatively weak blast from below can destroy the structural relationship between floors and supporting members, allowing the floors to pancake down — as happened in Oklahoma City."

In summary, unless all factors associated with an explosion are fully considered and very carefully evaluated, any "findings" are inconclusive. And speculations based on pseudoscience, skewed science or no science at all can do no more than cripple the pursuit of fact.

Seismic Records

It is common knowledge that the OKC blast was recorded by at least two seismographs; copies of the seismograms have been making the rounds by mail and fax for months. Some of them are pretty clear, some are downright unreadable, and others show clear signs of tampering. In the case of the latter, any tampering probably was in a lame attempt to bolster the "two-bomb theory." Was there one explosion or two? Basically, the jury's still out. In an attempt to get definitive answers, I interviewed Dr. Thomas L. Holzer of the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) in Menlo Park, California, and Dr. R.L. Brown of the Oklahoma Geological Survey (OGS) located in Norman.

Both graciously shared with me a plenitude of information, at times

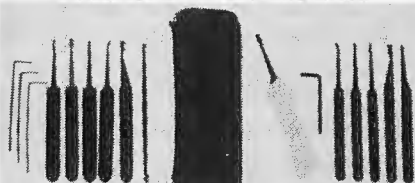
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making me feel as if I were getting a crash course in seismology. I found both of these men to be honest and open minded.

A key thing to remember is that both of these men are scientists. When talking to scientists, you have to ask specific questions and then *listen*. But human nature being what it is, people often hear only what they want to hear, especially if it seems to support a preselected scenario. In this case, many of the conspiracy buffs only heard enough to convince them that Dr. Brown was positive there were two explosions, therefore he must be right, while Dr. Holzer felt there was only one blast, so he must be part of the cover-up.

So who is right? We'll just have to wait and see. Both of these men were expressing preliminary conclusions based on the data available at the time. And since that data showed some admittedly anomalous signatures, no absolutely conclusive determination could be reached with any degree of scientific certainty. The bottom line: The OGS and the USGS each came up with the data they have,

based on the information available to them. Much of what I told these scientists about explosive behavior was new and interesting to them. When more information relating to explosive behavior becomes available to them, they likely will factor it into their calculations. But until they have everything they need to work with, we'll just have to wait.

Soon after the OKC blast, reports of another bomb found in the rubble set off a panicked evacuation of rescue personnel. On interviewing a member of the Oklahoma City police department's bomb squad, we determined that in fact the item found was a dummy TOW anti-tank missile that had been on display in the Marine Corps' recruiting office on the sixth floor. Unfamiliar with military ordnance, the police had called in the Army's 61st Explosive Ordnance Disposal team from Fort Sill, Oklahoma. The soldiers identified the missile as an inert trainer. But the failure of the news media to follow up on this simply fed the rumors.

And perhaps the most germane question of all: Would a single truck

bomb of approximately 5,000 pounds of ANFO be capable of destroying so much of that building?

Based on years of hands-on experience, I can say there is no doubt in my mind that a large ANFO bomb would be capable of destroying that building. *SOF's* demo expert, Donovan, noted: "For perspective, consider that the German V-1 and V-2 missiles that devastated London carried only 1,650 pounds of an explosive not dissimilar in brisance and yield. In other words, would three V-2s simultaneously striking the first floor of the Murrah building do such damage? Of course they would."

For the past two years we have been working under a cloud of conspiracy-theory fallout from the Waco debacle that has proved to be a royal pain to attorneys and investigators trying to get to the bottom of things. Now, the same has started with the Oklahoma City bombing.

When I testified during the House of Representatives' hearings on Waco, I saw firsthand how out-of-control conspiracy theories confused that issue, allowing congressional whiner

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Charlie Schumer and his buddies in federal law enforcement to come out the winners.

If the government did screw up in OKC, then sticking to the facts and relying on scientific methodology will be the *only* way to get to the bottom of it. Ask yourself this question: Who ultimately benefits the most from such way-out, conspiratorial fantasies? Answer: Those *hiding* any facts ultimately are the ones who would benefit from these clouds of scientifically impossible theories and unfounded conspiracy scenarios manufactured for reasons of political self-protection, misguided patriotism — or tabloids' profit.

Frequent SOF contributor and veteran EOD man Richard Sherrow was in Oklahoma City the day after the blast. ✕

BIG-BORE BRUISER

Continued from page 53

Ultra Slug gun. However, he wanted to be sure so he reached for a seventh

box, of Federal 450-grain Hydra-Shock Premium Sabot Slugs. He fired one and we marked it on the target. His first shot was 1 1/2 inches to the left of the center mark. The second was 1 inch to the left, and his third shot was in the same hole as the first. Just to be sure, he fired a fourth shot. It was 1 inch to the left of the first shot. When he cleaned the bore he pulled out the least amount yet of plastic residue, unburned powder, and other debris.

The eighth round of shooting was with Remington's 3-inch Slugger ammo. After marking the first shot, Allen fired the second slug which hit 2 inches to the right. His third shot was 6 inches to the right of the first. When he cleaned the bore he found it to be badly fouled with lead.

Spray And Pray

The ninth and tenth boxes of ammunition were the 2 3/4-inch Remington Sluggers. It was obvious the gun didn't like those slugs. Both groups were strictly spray and pray.

Allen reached for the next box, for round 11: Remington 2 3/4-inch

Copper Solid Sabots. Allen's first shot was 3 1/2 inches high. His second shot was 4 1/2 inches high, only 1 inch off. His third shot was 2 1/2 inches high. The overall group was only 3 inches across and all three shots were centered. He was back to rifle-like accuracy with a 3-inch group at 100 yards.

The Remington 3-inch Copper Solid was used for group 12; the first shot was 3 1/2 inches high and 2 inches left. The second Copper Solid hit 5 1/2 inches high and 2 inches left. The third shot hit 4 1/4 inches high and 2 inches left, splitting the group for a 2-inch, 100-yard group. Both batches of Copper Solid Sabot slugs however, left the barrel fouled with plastic.

The last test group was Brenneke slugs. The first shot hit 2 1/2 inches to the left and half an inch low. The second shot was 1 1/2 inches high and 1 inch left. The third shot was 2 1/2 inches high and 1 inch left. Once again the group size was under 3 inches overall.

After the last round, I asked Allen what he thought of H&R's slug gun.

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