

STATEMENT BY PRESIDENT BILL CLINTON AND BRIEFING BY ATTORNEY GENERAL JANET
RENO SUBJECT: BOMBING OF FEDERAL BUILDING IN OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA
THE WHITE HOUSE BRIEFING ROOM 5:30 P.M. EDT WEDNESDAY, APRIL 19, 1995
Z-19-01 page# 1

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THIS IS A RUSH TRANSCRIPT.

PRESIDENT CLINTON: The bombing in Oklahoma City was an attack on
innocent children and defenseless citizens. It was an act of
cowardice and it was evil. The United States will not tolerate it.
And I will not allow the people of this country to be intimidated by
evil cowards.

I have met with our team which we assembled to deal with this
bombing, and I have determined to take the following steps to assure
the strongest response to this situation.

First, I have deployed a crisis management team, under the
leadership of the FBI, working with the Department of Justice, the
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, military and local
authorities. We are sending the world's finest investigators to solve
these murders.

Second, I have declared an emergency in Oklahoma City, and at my
direction, James Lee Witt, the director of the Federal Emergency
Management Agency, is now on his way there to make sure we do
everything we can to help the people of Oklahoma deal with the
tragedy.

Third, we are taking every precaution to reassure and to protect
people who work in or live near other federal facilities. Let there
be no room for doubt, we will find the people who did this. When we
do, justice will be swift, certain and severe. These people are
killers and they must be treated like killers.

Finally, let me say that I ask all Americans tonight to pray; to
pray for the people who have lost their lives, to pray for the
families and the friends of the dead and the wounded, to pray for the
people of Oklahoma City.

MORE

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May God's grace be with them. Meanwhile, we will be about our work.

Thank you.

Q Mr. President, how many --

Q (Off mike) -- reassure people?

ATTY GEN. RENO: This has been a tragic and heartbreaking day. I can tell you this: The FBI and the law enforcement community will pursue every lead and use every possible resource to bring the people responsible to justice.

The FBI has established a command post in Oklahoma City and it is in 24-hour contact with FBI headquarters command post and with the Department of Justice. Four FBI special agents in charge have been dispatched to the scene to provide 24-hour operation of the command post. The FBI has sent four evidence response teams and explosive ordnance teams to Oklahoma City. Five of the very best FBI agents experienced in this type of investigation are arriving in Oklahoma City, as have bomb technicians from Boston, Chicago, Miami, San Francisco and Los Angeles. Thirteen members of the Rapid Start Team will be entering data as the evidence is collected. Fifty more agents are available for arrival tomorrow, and more will be used as needed. The FBI and federal law enforcement have received superb cooperation from local authorities in Oklahoma City and the federal law enforcement agencies are working together.

The ATF has sent two national response teams and a mobile command center. It has three explosive technicians and three laboratory technicians in Oklahoma City, and it is prepared to send 20 to 25 more personnel tomorrow. The Secret Service is also sending explosives experts.

In addition, the Oklahoma National Guard has been deployed to assist in control of the area and the evacuation of the injured. The United States Army has deployed the 61st Ordnance Detachment with a robot from Fort Sill, Oklahoma. The Tulsa Police Department has deployed two bomb technicians, two dogs and a robot. And the FEMA is playing a major role in aid and assistance.

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We cannot tell how long it will be before we can say with certainty what occurred and who is responsible, but we will find the perpetrators, and we will bring them to justice.

(Cross talk.)

Q Have you put out a bulletin seeking some particular suspects, and what can you tell us about that? There are reports that their descriptions have covered people, groups -- (seeking?) --

ATTY GEN. RENO: What I can say about all evidentiary issues and all leads is that it would be -- it would hinder the investigation to discuss any action that we are taking pursuant to the leads, but we are pursuing absolutely every shred of evidence available.

(Cross talk.)

Q Surely if people are to be on the lookout for someone, isn't there a way that you can -- (word inaudible) -- those people?

Q It sounds from everything you've said that you've concluded that this was a terrorist attack of some kind. Can you confirm that?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I would not characterize it as such until the evidence is in, but we are pursuing every piece of evidence in -- with whatever motivation behind it.

Q Do you have any statistics on the casualties?

ATTY GEN. RENO: We have some statistics on the casualties but they are increasing every moment. What we are trying to do is to make sure that we pursue every lead --

Q Do you have any rough statistics --

ATTY GEN. RENO: What we have been told is that there were 550 people assigned in the building. Only 250 had been accounted for before I came in. There may be as many as 100 to 250 more people to account for. The casualty figures are climbing. 100 victims have been treated. Six children who were in the day care center have been confirmed as dead, and we are just pursuing absolutely every lead that we can.

Q General, have there been any other threats against any other federal buildings across the country?

ATTY GEN. RENO: In any situation like this there are sometimes terribly misguided, horrible people who create copycat situations. We've responded in each instance and so far nothing has materialized.

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Q General Reno, was there any indication, any warning, that anything like this could happen? Because there have been conflicting reports that, not specific warnings per se but there might be terrorist activity in the period after March?

ATTY GEN. RENO: Again, I can't comment on any specific lead or any of the evidence that we have developed.

Q Do you think that there is a tie-up with Waco?

Q Ms. Reno, the current Crime Bill that the president has signed includes a death penalty provision. Assuming you do catch these people, will you go for that?

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ATTY GEN. RENO: Eighteen USC, Section 844, relates to those who maliciously damage or destroy a federal building. If there is death -- if death occurs, the death penalty is available, and we will seek it.

Q General Reno, any more indication of where this device exploded in --

ATTY GEN. RENO: Again, that would be commenting on the evidence that is being developed, and we would not want to do that, because to do so would -- could possibly hinder the investigation.

Q General Reno, if other governments are --

Q General Reno -- (inaudible) -- I'm sorry -- on the importance of this event, are we crossing a new threshold of concern about security in this country when even Oklahoma City is not safe?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I think that this has been a matter of concern for all Americans any time you see acts like this around the world, and I think it is a matter that has got to be pursued with all vigor. I can't tell you whether it's a crossroads.

I can tell you that any time something like this occurs, we have to do everything possible to insure that the people who are responsible are held accountable, and that we do everything we can to prevent a future recurrence.

Q General Reno, can you tell me whether or not this is a coincidence --

Q General, what cautions would you urge other people who work in federal buildings or live near them to take?

ATTY GEN. RENO: We're working with the General Services Administration, the United States Marshal Service, and the FBI to take sensible precautions, and the federal employees who had been involved have just been wonderful.

Q General, (have you ?) decided whether this is just a coincidence that it happened on the second anniversary of the Waco siege?

ATTY GEN. RENO: Again, we are pursuing all leads. We cannot tell exactly what happened or who is responsible, and it would be better not to comment until we can conclusively talk about it.

Q General Reno, has anyone called to claim responsibility for this, any credible group or organization?

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ATTY GEN. RENO: Again, I don't think that I should comment on the evidence, because to do so would hinder the investigation.

Q Can you confirm it was a car bomb?

ATTY GEN. RENO: Again, I cannot confirm any evidentiary lead that we are pursuing, because I think that would hinder the investigation.

Q General, if another government or governments are found to be involved, would military retaliation be appropriate? Will it be carried out?

ATTY GEN. RENO: I don't think that we should deal with "what ifs." I think we should make sure that those people who are responsible are pursued and brought to justice.

STAFF: Do we have a last question, please?

Q General, the government of Israel has offered its help, because it has a vast experience with this sort of thing. Do you know if we're accepting that help?

ATTY GEN. RENO: We will, of course, rely on any additional resource that can possibly be involved and be utilized appropriately in bringing these people to justice.

Thank you.

STAFF: Thank you very much.

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