

NATION

Sen. Richard G. Lugar of Indiana officially joins the Republican presidential race /A2



METRO

Secretary of Public Safety Jerry Kilgore breaks the official silence on ABC raids in Shockoe /B1



THURSDAY

Mostly cloudy today; high 73, low 55. Storms possible tomorrow; high 75. /B14



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TERROR IN MIDDLE AMERICA

'It was like Beirut'

12 children among 31 dead in Oklahoma City bombing

BY JESSE KATZ AND LIANNE HART
LOS ANGELES TIMES/WASHINGTON POST
NEWS SERVICE

OKLAHOMA CITY — A thundering, half-ton car bomb destroyed nearly half of a nine-story federal building yesterday in downtown Oklahoma City, killing 31 people, including at least 12 children, and leaving 200 people missing.

Authorities said they were certain the death toll would climb. For hours, many of the dead were impossible to reach in the tangled wreckage.

"It was like Beirut; everything was burning and flattened," a doctor said.

Rescuers brought most of the injured — including children as young as 18 months old — to St. Anthony Hospital, which reported treating more than 200 people for cuts, burns and shattered bones. A nurse, blood-stained and crying, said: "I was shocked to think that someone could do that to small children."

The FBI said it had hundreds of potential suspects. "A number of coincidences have occurred," said FBI spokesman Bob Ricks in Oklahoma City, without elaborating. "But to say that it was one particular group or one individual, we're not anywhere near making a statement with regard to that. We have no indication with regard to group or with regard to reason."

Even before the smoke had cleared, federal investigators began a search for telltale signs of ammonium nitrate and kerosene, critical ingredients in the explosive that dam-

aged the World Trade Center in New York more than a year ago. The terror began shortly after 9 a.m.

Hundreds of employees had reported for work at the Alfred Murrah Building, which houses offices of agencies such as the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, Social Security, Veterans Affairs, the Drug Enforcement Administration, Housing and Urban Development, a federal employees credit union and military recruiting offices.

Many had dropped off their children at a day-care center on the second floor. Employees in other downtown offices had just brought their youngsters to another day-care nursery at the YMCA nearby.

With a rumble, a bomb — thought by some authorities to have been in a parked car near the front of the building — exploded and sent the entire north side of the structure crumbling to the ground.

The bomb was large, perhaps 1,000 to 1,200 pounds, said John Magaw, director of the ATF. Keating told reporters: "Obviously no amateur did this. Whoever did this was an animal."

Workers, some in their underwear because the blast had torn their clothing off, staggered, screaming out of the building. They were covered with glass, plaster and blood. Many were in tears.

A nurse, Bobby Johnson, 42, was just getting off work at the South Park Medical Center, 4½ miles away. He heard an explosion, then what

PLEASE SEE BOMB, PAGE A8 ►

Day-care center attendance high

Many children still unaccounted for

FROM WIRE REPORTS

OKLAHOMA CITY — The blast occurred at the start of the work day, as parents were dropping off their youngsters at the day-care center in the federal building.

There was a terrible roar. The walls fell, the ceiling gave way and shards of glass like so many bright razors filled the air.

And, suddenly, a modern drama called urban terrorism had been transformed into an ancient ceremony of horror — the slaughter of the innocents.

The car bomb that leveled much of a nine-story federal office building in Oklahoma City exploded directly under a day-care center on the structure's second floor and badly damaged another baby-sitting facility in a nearby YMCA.

Before the smoke had cleared, Heather Taylor, an emergency worker, had tagged the feet of at least a

dozen children at the morgue. Two were burned beyond recognition. The bodies of the rest, up to 7 years old, were mangled.

Ten to 20 other children were unaccounted for late in the day. Taylor knew of only two who had survived. One was in surgery, the other in intensive care.

"The day-care center is totally gone," said Dr. Carl Spengler, who helped Taylor with the victims.

It was just above the spot where the car bomb exploded. Toys and games were scattered amid broken glass and other debris on the street.

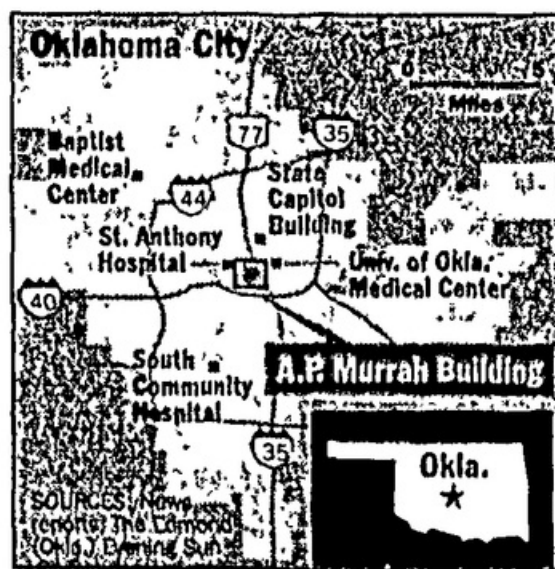
"At the time it blew up, the place [in the federal building] should have been full" with parents dropping off their children, Spengler said.

TV stations broadcast a description of an injured red-headed toddler, asking for her parents to contact the hospital because she needed sur-

PLEASE SEE CHILDREN, PAGE A8 ►

Blast site

An explosion tore apart a federal building in Oklahoma City yesterday.



Stories inside

Rescuers outnumber survivors
Hundreds of doctors, nurses and citizen volunteers reported to the bomb scene, but there were not enough survivors to keep everyone busy. Page A8

Clinton expresses outrage
President Clinton said the bombing was the work of "evil cowards." Page A9

Security checks
While security at the U.S. Courthouse in Richmond was increased, no additional steps were taken at the Federal Building here. Page A9

Why in Oklahoma City? Because it sends message

Blast shows no American place is safe

BY MIKE FEINSILBER
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

It was not only the horror, but the place.

Oklahoma City. A bombing at the World Trade Center, in Manhattan, is one thing. Tragic and outrageous, but, after all, New York has often been a lightning rod for extremists and maniacs. In New York, in Washington, in Los Angeles, strange things happen.

The World Trade Center bombing brought terrorism to America's shores. Oklahoma City brought it to America's heartland.

Who would target Oklahoma City and destroy the calm?

"We are pursuing all leads," said Attorney General Janet Reno. Tight-lipped and guarded, she declined to speculate about possible suspects.

Whoever was responsible, whatever the motive, the message yesterday was simple and inescapable: If it

could happen in Oklahoma City it could happen anywhere. That message crossed the country as Americans watched the television images from 200 N.W. Fifth St., between Harvey and Robinson.

At a federal courthouse in northeastern Tennessee, a clerk told a reporter, "I just have chills. This is just little Greeneville, Tennessee, but it could happen here."

The perpetrator could have been someone like the debt-burdened former postal worker charged with killing four people in Montclair, N.J., last month, or a shooter on the Long Island Rail Road in New York who killed six fellow passengers and wounded 19 three weeks before Christmas in 1993, or an unemployed man who killed 21 patrons at a McDonald's in San Ysidro, Calif., in 1984.

But Middle East terrorism came

PLEASE SEE WHY, PAGE A9 ►



INJURED TOT. An Oklahoma City firefighter carried an unidentified child who was injured yesterday in the blast at the Alfred Murrah Federal Building. The AP was attempting to identify and provide information on the child's condition. At least 17 of the known fatalities were small children.

Recent U.S. bombings

Feb. 26, 1993: An explosion at New York's World Trade Center kills six and injures more than 1,000. Four Muslims have been convicted.

Nov. 7, 1983: A bomb blows a hole in a wall just outside the Senate chamber at the Capitol. No one is hurt. Two leftist radicals plead guilty.

May 16, 1981: A bomb explodes at the Pan Am terminal at New York's Kennedy Airport, killing a man. A group calling itself the Puerto Rican Armed Resistance claims responsibility. No arrests are made.

Jan. 24, 1975: A bomb goes off at historic Fraunces Tavern in New York City, killing four. It was one of 49 bombings attributed to the Puerto Rican nationalist group FALN between 1974-77 in New York.

Dec. 29, 1975: A bomb explodes at the TWA terminal at New York's La Guardia Airport, killing 11 and injuring 75. No arrests are made.

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