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April 20, 1995



'It was like Beirut'

Death toll rising in Oklahoma City

Compiled from The Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — A worker died sitting in his office.

A woman burned to death getting out of her car.

Children's toys blew from a day-care center onto the street below.

Time stopped in downtown Oklahoma City at 9:04 a.m. Wednesday when a car bomb exploded outside the Alfred Murrah Federal Building.

At least 31 people were killed, including 12 children. More than 200 were injured—58 critically, Fire Chief Gary Marrs said. Two hundred remained missing early today.

As the rain continued Wednesday night in Oklahoma City, so did the search efforts. Scores were feared trapped in the building's rubble.

The death toll was certain to rise.

"Our firefighters are having to crawl over corpses in areas to get to people that are still alive," said Assistant Fire Chief Jon Hansen.

The blast ripped a nine-story hole in the office building. A second-floor day-care center was demolished.

The blast could be felt up to 30 miles away, but the mayhem stretched across the country. Federal buildings in several cities—including Omaha—were evacuated because of bomb threats.

There was no claim of responsibility for the attack, the deadliest U.S. bombing in 75 years.

Attorney General Janet Reno declined to comment on who might have been behind the attack, but said the

death penalty would be sought against them. President Clinton called the bombers "evil cowards."

Workers in the federal building front offices tumbled out of the nine-story building to the street below. One man fell into the 30-foot-wide bomb crater.

"It was like Beirut; everything was burning and flattened," said Dr. Carl Spengler, who was one of the first doctors at the scene.

The injured left a trail of blood for blocks as they fled. Rescue workers evacuated a five-block radius, where windows were blown out in nearly every building.

Christopher Wright of the Coast Guard, who was inside the building giving aid, said rescuers periodically turned off their chainsaws and prying tools to listen for calls of help.

"We didn't hear anything—just death," Wright said.

"You're helpless really, when you see people two feet away, you can't do anything, they're just smashed."

The bombing heightened U.S. fears of terrorism. The explosion was similar to the terrorist car bombing that killed six people and injured 1,000 at New York's World Trade Center in February 1993.

The explosion also occurred on the second anniversary of the fiery ending to the federal siege of the Branch Davidian compound in Waco, Texas. The FBI wouldn't speculate if there was a connection.

"Obviously no amateur did this," said Oklahoma Gov. Frank Keating. "Whoever did this was an animal."

Scene of the bombing

Developments Wednesday in the Oklahoma City federal office building explosion:

THE BUILDING

Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, nine-story federal office building where more than 500 people work.

THE BOMB

Believed to be 1,000- to 1,200-pound car bomb. Exploded outside building about 9 a.m.

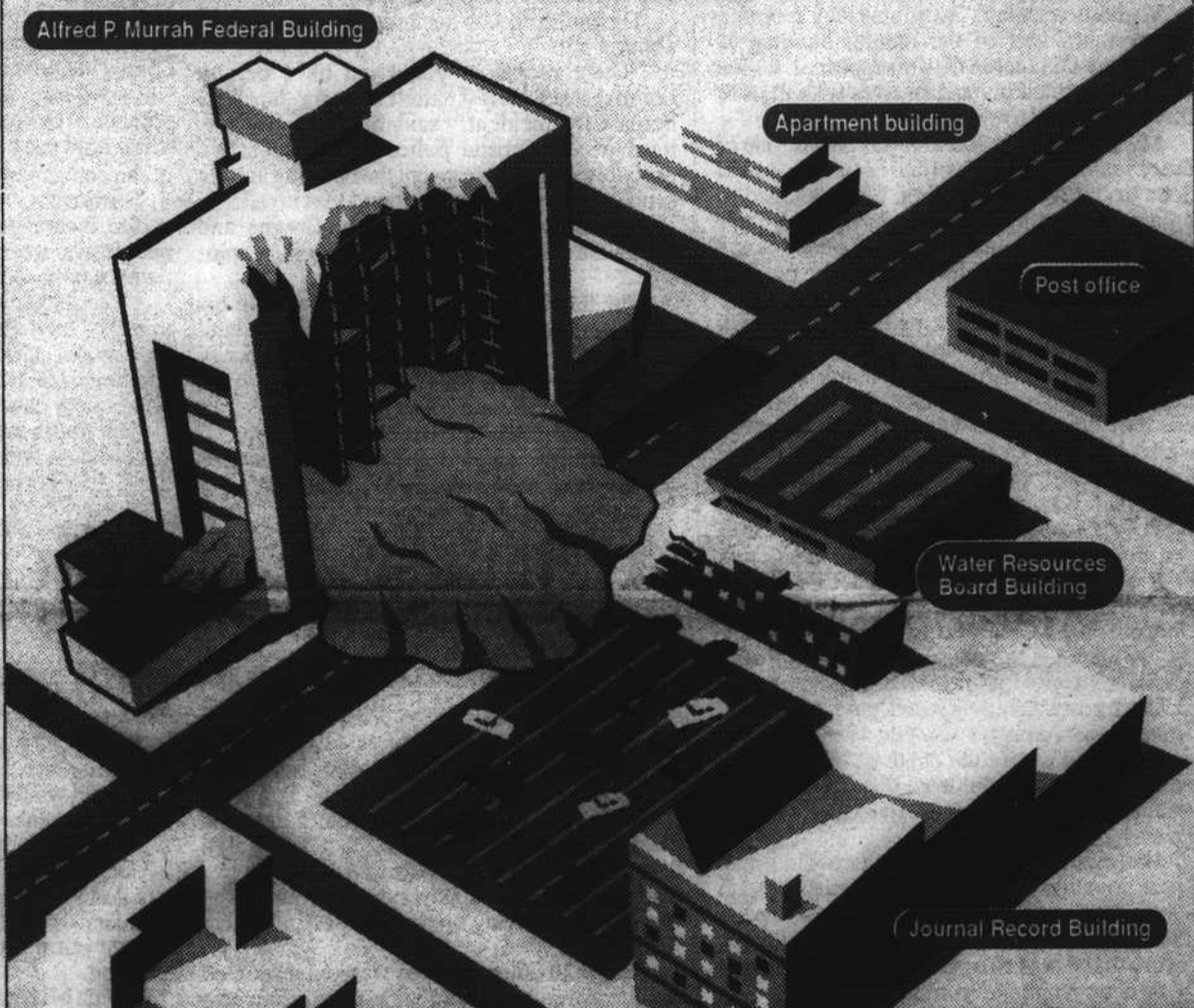
CASUALTIES

At least 31 dead, including 12 children, and more than 200 injured. Another 200 unaccounted for.

SUSPECTS

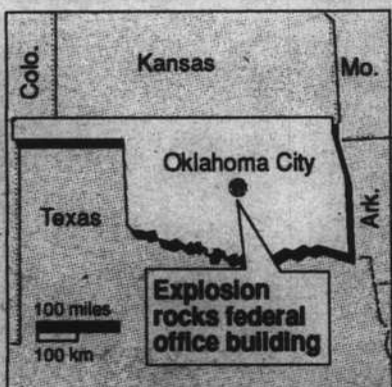
No one claimed responsibility. Federal authorities said terrorist act is possibility.

Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building



Bob Bianchini/AP, Doug Kouma/DN

Full Coverage — Page 2



AP, DN

- Former Daily Nebraskan columnist Sam Kepfield provides insight on the tragedy.
- Federal buildings across the nation receive bomb threats, tighten security.
- At least 12 children in day care center among the victims.

'I had to get the hell out'

By Chad Lorenz
Staff Reporter

The walls closed in on Mindy (Leiter) Kepfield as she was knocked down by the blast that rocked the federal building in downtown Oklahoma City Wednesday.

Kepfield, a reporter for The Oklahoma Journal Record and 1994 University of Nebraska-Lincoln graduate, said in a telephone interview that thick smoke consumed everything around her as debris rained from the ceiling.

Kepfield was a staff reporter for

the Daily Nebraskan from 1991 to 1994.



Kepfield

across from the federal building. The bomb blew away an entire side

of the nine-story federal building about 9 a.m., leaving at least 31 people dead, 200 injured and another 200 unaccounted for.

Kepfield said she first thought her building was on fire.

"I had to get the hell out," she said. Her co-workers in the first-floor newsroom evacuated out the back doors and regrouped at The Journal Record's parking garage, Kepfield said.

Everyone looked battered, she said, but the only serious injuries she ob-

See WITNESS on 2

Student assistants trained to look for suicide signs

By Matthew Waite
Senior Reporter

Student assistants in the residence halls receive hours of training on suicide warning signs and prevention, housing administrators said Wednesday.

After the weekend death of a University of Nebraska-Lincoln freshman from an apparent suicide, the Residence Education department in the Office of University Housing released materials used to train student assistants.

According to the documents, student assistants are trained in three areas relating to suicide: crisis prevention, understanding suicide and emergency procedures.

UNL Police Sgt. Bill Manning said Tuesday there had been eight suicide attempts since March 1994. Six of those have been in the Abel-Sandoz residence hall complex.

In the student assistant classes, students are taught to look for warning signs—some behavioral, some emotional and some physical.

The signs listed in the documents include:

●Physical signs, such as changes in appetite, chronic headaches, weight gain, persistent nausea and peptic ulcers.

●Emotional signs, such as nervousness, anger, depression, panic, guilt and paranoia.

●Behavioral signs, such as denial, inability to concentrate, excessive drinking, criminal behavior and a preoccupation with the past. Eight of 10 people who commit

suicide give warning signs, according to the documents.

Glen Schumann, acting director of housing, said statistics showed that students just entering college were most at risk for committing suicide.

"It's an ongoing concern for us," he said.

In the residence halls, Schumann said student assistants usually were the first to recognize the signs of suicide. They are instructed to notify their residence directors as soon

as they think there is a problem, he said.

Then, the residence director or student assistant tries to get counseling for the student from the University Health Center. The documents warn student assistants to recognize their limitations in counseling.

Every suicide sign may not be serious, Schumann said, but is still treated seriously by housing staff. "People say things to get attention," he said. "We have to ferret all that out."