

Olympic Park bombing suspect is cleared by prosecutors

Richard Jewell holds his ground, shakes off accusations and suspicions.

By TARA MEYER
Associated Press

ATLANTA — For 88 days, Richard Jewell stoically stood his ground, professing his innocence while he was branded the FBI's chief suspect in the Olympic Park pipe bombing. Finally cleared by prosecutors, the weight of suspicion lifted, he let his guard down and cried.

The tears came Monday as he recalled the bodies of friends injured by the blast, and then he turned to his mother, who buried her head in her hand.

"Mom, thanks for standing by me and believing in me," he said, his voice choking. "I love you."

Another emotion — anger — came out as he lashed out at reporters and investigators who had depicted him as the man who brought the specter of terrorism to the Summer Olympics.

But at the end of the press conference, he calmly delivered a message.

"I thank God that it has now ended and that you now know what I have known all along," he said in a firm voice.

"I am an innocent man."

The July 27 bomb blast at Centennial Olympic Park — the informal gathering place for spectators at the Games — killed one woman outright, was blamed for a cameraman's death and injured more than 100.

Jewell initially was hailed as a hero for alerting authorities to a suspicious

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RICHARD JEWELL
former suspect in Olympic Park bombing

knapsack and helping to evacuate the area. He gave numerous interviews until, three days after the bombing, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported he was a suspect.

Reporters staked out his apartment complex for days and followed his every move, while Jewell refused to comment. His mother, Barbara, in August tearfully begged President Clinton to "end this nightmare."

"I felt like a hunted animal, followed constantly, waiting to be killed," Jewell said. "The media said I fit the profile of a lone bomber. That was a lie. The media said I was a frustrated police wanna-be. That was a lie. I was, then and now, a law enforcement officer."

On Saturday, federal prosecutors gave Jewell's attorneys a letter clearing him as a suspect. To Jewell and his attorneys, the letter is a weak attempt at an apology.

"While the government can tell you that I am an innocent man, the government's letter cannot give me back my good name or my reputation," Jewell said.

"In their mad rush to fulfill their own personal agendas, the FBI and the media almost destroyed me and my mother."

His lawyers plan to sue the Journal-Constitution and NBC for comments Tom Brokaw made in early news reports about the bombing. The Journal-Constitution on Monday defended its stories about Jewell as "accurate and appropriate."

A lawsuit against the FBI is being considered.

"I don't have enough words, I can't cuss enough, to describe the way they have treated this man," said Watson Bryant, one of Jewell's lawyers.

He also lashed out at the FBI over affidavits released Monday that were used to gain warrants for searches of Jewell's home and other property in the days after the bombing, saying they are "full of half-truths."

The papers, which a judge had ordered unsealed with names blacked out, quote several acquaintances speaking of Jewell's fascination with police work. They also quote witnesses who saw Jewell in the vicinity of the explosion, but none who saw him handle the bomb.

"I think the American public should be shocked at how little it takes for the government to get a search warrant," Bryant said. "Who are these people?"

FBI spokesman Jay Spadafore declined to respond.

Dole supports amendment to end affirmative action

SAN DIEGO (AP) — Bob Dole sounded his campaign-year call once again to end affirmative action, saying Monday that "racial distinctions have no place in our lives or in our laws."

Reiterating his endorsement of California's Proposition 209 that would end race- and sex-based preferences in public jobs and education, the former senator acknowledged he once supported such preferences.

"It is true that many of us ... supported some race-conscious measure designed to speed the process of inclusion — measures that were supposed to be transitional and temporary," Dole said. "But this was a blind alley in the search for equal justice. We should have learned from it."

Sounding an introspective note, Dole added: "Every time I drive to work in Washington, D.C., or drive down North Capitol Street and I see dozens and dozens of black men without work, I say to myself, 'What has this law done for them?' Absolutely nothing."

Dole, in an all-out bid to win California, spoke to a small, indoor gathering of Republicans. Outdoors as Dole crossed the street from his downtown hotel, he was harangued by at least 100 Clinton-Gore supporters and opponents of Proposition 209 who bore signs calling the ballot initiative racist.

"It is easy for demagogues of either side to play on fear or play on resentment," Dole said.

President Clinton opposes the initiative and has said of affirmative action, "mend it, don't end it." This morning, California Gov. Pete Wilson called the president's policy a "semantic dodge."

With polls finding Dole lagging



in California anywhere from 8 to 20 points behind Clinton, the GOP campaign extended its tour here by one day and floated plans for a last-minute blitz of the state next week.

"This is the state — if he can't win California, he's going back to Little Rock," Dole said.

The GOP released a new TV ad to air in 50 House districts and warn voters that electing a Democratic Congress would amount to a blank check for Clinton. It amounted to a tacit admission that the president may be on his way to a second term.

In a conference call with reporters Monday, Republican National Chairman Haley Barbour said, "The ads remind people of why they are against Clinton. They talk about what Clinton was like when he had a Democratic Congress. It reinforces Dole's message."

The Dole campaign released its own new ads today: one in Florida to combat Democratic charges that Dole's tax cuts would gut Medicare. The other, featuring a working mother in support of Dole's economic plan, is being aired in the Midwest and other regions.

Later Monday, Dole was to go to Newport Beach to film the last of his campaign commercials.

Clinton was in the Midwest touting reductions in the federal budget deficit during his presidency. Republicans previously had credited the GOP-run Congress for shrinking the deficit.

A Los Angeles Times poll last week showed a slim majority — 54 percent — in favor of Proposition 209, and only 7 percent who considered illegal immigration a major factor in their voting.

Students injured in bus accident

From The Associated Press

ANGLETON, Texas — A school bus driver and 13 elementary students were injured — two critically — when a pickup truck forced their bus off a rural road and into a ditch Monday afternoon.

The bus was carrying 15 children home from Westside Elementary School about 55 miles south of Houston when the driver swerved to avoid colliding with a pickup truck and ended up on its side in a ditch.

Police were looking for the truck, which failed to stop.

Two 9-year-old girls were hospitalized in critical condition. Eleven others had lesser injuries. The bus driver, 35-year-old Mary Melissa Chaver, was hospitalized in good condition Monday night.

Labor union, General Motors still remain at bargaining table

DETROIT (AP) — General Motors and the United Auto Workers negotiated into the early morning hours Monday, passing a midnight strike deadline, and the union ruled out a walkout for the moment.

"The only place you can settle these agreements is at the bargaining table," UAW President Stephen Yokich said at a news conference.

There had been speculation that after the UAW's midnight deadline passed without a contract, the union might have called a strike at selected plants or sent all its 215,000 GM members to the picket line. But the union decided to return to the bargaining table; talks were to resume today.

Talks broke off around 2 a.m. Monday after nearly 17 hours. Negotiators then were glum-faced and declined to comment. But workers went to their jobs as usual Monday, awaiting word on what was to come next.

Management issued a statement repeating what it had said for the past several days. Gerald Knechtel, GM's vice president of personnel, said GM has made "significant progress" on many issues.

"We are committed to continuing

the dialogue and resolving the remaining issues with the UAW," Knechtel said.

Yokich said the UAW remained committed to the idea of entering the next century with the Big Three auto makers as partners. He said the UAW entered the talks in that spirit and wasn't ready to give up.

"We intend to go back to the main table," he said. "We intend to try to reach an agreement."

He said Ford Motor Co. and Chrysler Corp., which have already settled with the UAW, understood the partnership idea, but "I'm not too sure that GM still understands that," Yokich said.

Negotiations became complicated last week because of UAW's demand to keep at least 95 percent of its union jobs over the next three years.

Ford and Chrysler have already agreed to the demand, but it was unclear if the issue was still a sticking point with GM after negotiators met for nearly 17 hours over the weekend.

If the union does strike, it could call a nationwide work stoppage or select certain plants for walkouts.

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