



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Press Conference

THE HONORABLE JANET RENO, ATTORNEY GENERAL

Wednesday, October 14, 1998

1:02 p.m.

P R O C E E D I N G S

(1:02 p.m.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Two years ago, the world came together at the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta. On the night of July 27th, Centennial Olympic Park was overflowing with athletes, tourists, fans, parents, and children. As thousands milled close by, a powerful pipe bomb detonated. One person died, more than 100 others were injured, many severely. In an instant, the games of peace were shattered by senseless violence.

Six months later, another homemade bomb exploded outside Sandy Springs Professional Building, in north Atlanta. As emergency personnel arrived on the scene, a second bomb went off. More people were wounded, including some Federal agents.

Then, a few weeks after that, another bomb went off, and five more were wounded, this time outside of Atlanta's Other Side Lounge.

For two years, we have worked ceaselessly to solve these heinous crimes. Now we are taking another step forward. Today, the Federal Government is charging Eric Robert Rudolph with the bombings at the 1996 Summer Olympic Games, the Sandy Springs Professional Building

and the Other Side Lounge.

Earlier this morning, a Federal magistrate judge in Atlanta issued a warrant for Rudolph's arrest on these charges. The warrant is public. But as is often the case with fugitives, the affidavits must remain sealed for now. That is because we want to protect the integrity of our investigation, as well as the safety of witnesses who have come forward.

Eric Rudolph is on the run. Hundreds of agents are on his trail. They have spent thousands of hour pursuing leads, interviewing witnesses, and tracing components of each of the bombs. Without their efforts, these charges would not have been possible. And I want to commend them and congratulate them.

Today, we are also releasing a new photograph, showing Eric Rudolph, dressed as he may have been in Centennial Park. We hope anyone who sees this man will contact us immediately. Anyone with information should call 1-888-ATF-BOMB. That is 1-888-ATF-BOMB. Our reward stands, up to \$1 million for information leading to his arrest.

I want to thank the people -- all the people -- who have been involved in this effort. The people of western North Carolina and the surrounding area have been very cooperative, and especially local law enforcement there. It is there that we believe Eric Rudolph is hiding. We are going to keep searching until we find him. And we are not going to rest until we bring him to justice.

Today I am joined by FBI Director Louis Freeh; Treasury Under Secretary James Johnson; ATF Director John McGaw; Milton Nicks, the Director of the Georgia Bureau of Investigation; Woody Anderson, the Inspector in charge of the Task Force; the acting U.S. Attorney in Atlanta, Nina Hunt; and Sally Yates, one of the lead lawyers in this case. I thank them all for a job well done.

I would now like to introduce Director Freeh, whose Bureau has worked around the clock on this investigation.

DIRECTOR FREEH: Thank you, Attorney General Reno. And let me publicly commend you for your leadership in this very long and very complex investigation, and for working as hard and providing the leadership that your law enforcement officers, and several departments, have

followed.

Mr. Rudolph is now charged with six bombings, including the Birmingham bombing. And that complaint you have seen already.

The gravity of these offenses is reflected, first of all, in the indiscriminate nature of his targets, innocent civilians in almost every case, and also a planned and deliberate attack against law enforcement officers, rescuers, first-aid individuals, who came to the scenes both in Sandy Springs and the Other Side bombings.

The investigation has been one of the largest conducted by the Federal Government. And I want to thank all of the agencies and the men and women who have performed and are performing that investigation. Beyond the FBI, the ATF, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, the Alabama Bureau of Investigation, the Birmingham Police Department, who lost an officer in the Birmingham bombing, the Georgia Bureau of Corrections, and the Macon County Sheriff's Department.

I also want to commend the U.S. Attorney's Offices in Birmingham, Atlanta and western North Carolina for their hard work and investigative leadership.

We will pursue this case, obviously, as a matter of top law enforcement priority. These cases have a grave impact on public safety, as well as the ability of people to exercise their freedoms and liberties, including peaceful Olympic games, which of course are now scheduled to occur in Salt Lake City.

These cases require a lot of work, a lot of dedication and a lot of patience. And whether it is 16 years in the Kaczynski case or bringing Yosef back for prosecution here in the United States, or Mr. McVeigh in Oklahoma City, or the bombings in East Africa, these cases have top and continuing priority. They are the focus of a lot of energy and a lot of sacrifice by many people.

We also want to thank the people, both in Birmingham, western North Carolina, and Atlanta for their assistance. In fact, as you know from the Birmingham complaint, Mr. Rudolph was initially identified not by law enforcement officers but by civilians, potential victims of that attack, who identified him to law enforcement. And they have

continued to supply information, all of those communities, and we have called upon and rely upon the public for their assistance in now locating Mr. Rudolph, which is the next step to this investigation.

Let me introduce Jim Johnson, who is the Under Secretary for Law Enforcement at the Department of the Treasury, who oversees not just the ATF but all the Treasury law enforcement, and thank him for his leadership and support, particularly of the ATF.

Jim.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Director Freeh.

And good afternoon.

I am pleased to be here to join today in this very important announcement. Today we are, together, taking a major step towards bringing to justice the person we believe to be responsible for three senseless acts of violence: the bombings in Atlanta's Centennial Olympic Park, the bombing of the Sandy Springs Professional Building and of the Other Side Lounge.

I commend the ATF, the FBI, the many, many State and local law enforcement agencies, and the Justice Department prosecutors for their tremendous efforts, their untiring efforts, during the last two years. We stand here today because of their cooperation and their determination to bring this case to a close.

I would like to note especially the importance on the Federal side of the partnership between the ATF and the FBI. These two bureaus, and the expertise they bring to bear to this particular task, have been key to building this case.

It has been a very long haul. It is not over. And we are committed to moving forward. With these charges today, we underscore our continuing commitment to find Eric Rudolph and to bring him to justice.

Thank you.

And I would like to introduce the Director of the ATF, whose men and women forensic experts and agents in the field have also played such

an important role in this investigation.

Director McGaw.

MR. MCGAW: Most people came to the Olympics to enjoy a sporting event. At least one came to destroy that joy. People have the right to come to clinics to consult with doctors. And at least one came to interrupt that right.

Most people came to the lounge in Atlanta to meet with friends and enjoy relaxation. At least one came with hatred, with intent to injure, intimidate and paralyze a great city.

On two of these occasions, a second bomb was placed and timed to injure America's first responders. This United States District Court arrest warrant for Eric Robert Rudolph moves us one step closer to ending the campaign of violence that began over two years ago.

These charges are a product of hard work, commitment and dedication of the hundreds of law enforcement officers, explosives enforcement officers and forensic scientists who continue to work tirelessly on every aspect of this investigation.

The members of this partnership have already been mentioned by the Attorney General, Director Freeh, and Under Secretary Johnson. They need not be repeated. They only need to be reaffirmed. And I do that.

Each of them brings unique expertise that is collectively being applied daily on behalf of the American people. I concur with the Attorney General's appeal for continued public vigilance in helping authorities safely bring Eric Rudolph before our judicial system, where truth and justice will ultimately prevail.

Thank you.

QUESTION: Director Freeh, good afternoon.

Can you tell us anything about the origins of that picture, how that was put together, whose photograph?

DIRECTOR FREEH: Yes, that was a photograph that was obtained during the course of the investigation. But I do not think I should identify

the source. But it is a photograph that the investigators obtained during the course of the investigation. It is not evidence, per se, of the case.

QUESTION: That is not what you believe he wore that night -- precisely that night?

DIRECTOR FREEH: I do not know.

QUESTION: Where would you charge him or have the trial first and prosecution?

DIRECTOR FREEH: The first objective is to safely apprehend him. He is charged now by complaint in two different districts. And the Attorney General I believe will make that decision.

QUESTION: But it has not been made?

QUESTION: What is the significance of the photograph?

DIRECTOR FREEH: It is just a good photograph, we believe.

QUESTION: It was indicated that might be what he was wearing at Centennial Park?

DIRECTOR FREEH: Yes.

QUESTION: Why do you believe that?

DIRECTOR FREEH: Again, based on the investigation and interviews and evidence found in the course of the investigation.

QUESTION: Have you been able to put together a time line of his whereabouts in Atlanta during any of these cases?

DIRECTOR FREEH: Yes, we have a very good time line.

QUESTION: Do you have witnesses who have seen him in Atlanta around the time?

DIRECTOR FREEH: Again, I do not want to comment on specific

witnesses. Some of that is reflected in the complaint. And we have a good time line both before and after all of the bombings.

QUESTION: Director, do you believe -- is it a stronger possibility that someone or a group of people are shielding Rudolph or helping him in some way in western North Carolina?

DIRECTOR FREEH: There is no indication that any group of people are assisting him. And there is really no good information that any single individual has assisted him with maybe perhaps one exception. And that we are aware of and we are working on it.

QUESTION: (Off microphone) -- search directed?

DIRECTOR FREEH: The search is relegated, as you know, to western North Carolina. And it is a very rugged and difficult terrain, one where someone who is trained in survival-ship, as Mr. Rudolph is, can do very well, at least for some period of time. So the search has been primarily located now in western North Carolina.

QUESTION: Why are you so sure he is still there?

DIRECTOR FREEH: A sighting in one case, and other indications that he is still in that area.

QUESTION: Are you hopeful that the winter months will somehow flush him out?

DIRECTOR FREEH: We are hopeful of finding him quickly and safely. And certainly in that area, the winter months afford us better opportunities for observation. There are other points with respect to the season that we can exploit, and we intend to do that.

QUESTION: What do you hope these charges will say to the people of North Carolina? You indicate that there may be some people shielding him. What do you think that this will say to them or those who may support his supposed antiabortion?

DIRECTOR FREEH: The charges really speak for themselves. They indicate an individual charged -- only charged with six exhibit bombings, not particularly relegated to one target, but really indiscriminate in some respects, with regard to the victims involved.

We are hoping that this will add to the public attention, and certainly suggest or hope to motivate anybody that has information to help us.

QUESTION: Is the death penalty on your plate?

DIRECTOR FREEH: That is a determination that the Attorney General would ultimately make.

QUESTION: (Off microphone) -- as the primary charge that we are seeing on the warrant. Do you expect more charges? And can you tell us a little bit about this and what kind of penalties it carries?

DIRECTOR FREEH: The charge is Title 18, Section 844(i), which is a very serious felony. And in this case, we can say that he is charged with using an explosive devised to attack a facility used in interstate commerce. The penalties range up to death, when death results from the attack.

QUESTION: Mr. Freeh, why are you making these announcements at this time?

DIRECTOR FREEH: For several reasons. One, we have brought this case to the point of investigation, where a very strong and substantial case is made out against Mr. Rudolph, with respect to the Olympic bombing. The Olympic bombing, as you know, was an event of international attention because of the impacts and also the notoriety which it received. And we thought it was appropriate to advise the American people that we have reached this point in the investigation. And we also hope to garner more public attention and public support which would lead to his apprehension.

QUESTION: Do you have any indications that anybody in particular is interested at this time in protecting Rudolph?

DIRECTOR FREEH: No, I do not.

QUESTION: Director Freeh -- (off microphone) --

DIRECTOR FREEH: It is really a whole panoply of evidence. A lot of it is forensic. A lot of it has to do with statements that have been made by witnesses, both historically and contemporaneously, and his

background, experience, motivation, statements he has made to people. Also linkages between the bombings forensically with respect to time and place, the Army of God letters, and really a very powerful array of circumstantial and direct evidence.

QUESTION: Have you determined that he wrote the Army of God letter?

DIRECTOR FREEH: I cannot comment on that. Again, part of that is addressed in the complaint.

QUESTION: Should we conclude that it is your opinion at this point that on the night of the bombing, Eric Rudolph was wearing shorts? And have you been able to look through all of the thousands of videotape and still photographs? And have you found someone wearing that or have you found Eric Rudolph in those pictures?

DIRECTOR FREEH: We have not found him in those pictures. We have pretty well gone through them, although there probably are some additional ones. And film is constantly being brought to our attention.

Our best deduction and inference now is that that was the clothing he was wearing on the night of July 27th.

QUESTION: How many law enforcement personnel are looking for him right now?

DIRECTOR FREEH: I would say several hundred. And it varies from time to time, depending on the leads that we receive, and also investigation going on in different parts of the country, two or three cities identified. There is probably anywhere from 100 to 200 officers on a full-time assignment.

QUESTION: Do you have any information that anyone at all has -- (off microphone) --

DIRECTOR FREEH: Do you mean prior to the event?

Well, again, you know, historically, talking to many witnesses and getting statements as well as historical evidence, there were certainly indications that he was predisposed to do certain things. But nothing more than that.

QUESTION: (Off microphone) -- at the event -- (off microphone) --

DIRECTOR FREEH: The Olympic bombing?

QUESTION: yes.

DIRECTOR FREEH: No.

QUESTION: Mr. Freeh, what about the other man, the man with the gray beard? An artist drawing has a very similar looking man both at the abortion clinic, Sandy Springs and the Other Side Lounge. I know that you all said that these people may only be witnesses, but that is a big coincidence that the same looking man would be at both places. Are you not looking for possible conspirators?

DIRECTOR FREEH: We certainly do not rule anything out. And the investigation is not complete. We have not, however, identified a coconspirator. We have one individual charged with this event. And we would certainly be willing to adjust that accordingly, based on the evidence. But we do not have that evidence at this time.

QUESTION: Centennial Park wouldn't seem to fit in with this pattern. I mean you got an Army of God letter both for Birmingham and Atlanta, mentioning Sandy Springs and the Other Side, but not Centennial Park. So how does Centennial Park fit into his pattern?

DIRECTOR FREEH: I cannot really speculate as to his pattern. We just have the evidence which we have accumulated.

QUESTION: (Off microphone) --

VOICE: Come up to the microphone, please.

DIRECTOR FREEH: I'm sorry, Ms. Sally Yates is the Assistant Attorney in Atlanta.

MS. YATES: He was in front of a Federal Monument. I do not know where.

QUESTION: Atlanta or -- (off microphone) --

MS. YATES: I told you everything I know.

QUESTION: Mr. Freeh, how does the -- (off microphone) --

QUESTION: (Off microphone) --

DIRECTOR FREEH: Well, we hope that nobody would look at this defendant, who is charged not just with murders and material bombings, but with really indiscriminate attacks, attacks which, as you know, killed a police officer, almost killed a nurse in Birmingham, killed a 40-year-old mother in Atlanta, and caused the death of another individual. And as the Attorney General mentioned, over 120 people were injured.

This is not someone who is generally regarded in the United States or any other place as a hero. And we hope that it is not a denomination that attaches to him. But we want to emphasize the indiscriminate nature of these attacks, as well as the gravity of them, and hope that that will encourage anybody who has information to come forward.

QUESTION: (Off microphone) -- do not think that he is getting help from people in western North Carolina?

DIRECTOR FREEH: Well, as I said before, I do not have any indication that that is the case. And we certainly would be reacting to that if it was. But we do not have that evidence at this point.

QUESTION: (Off microphone) -- will he be charged -- (off microphone) -- aiding and abetting?

DIRECTOR FREEH: I do not want to identify anyone who has been of assistance to us or who may be a witness in the case. And, again, the answer to the question is I do not have any information that anyone is aiding him or abetting him at this time.

Yes, sir.

QUESTION: Director Freeh -- (off microphone) -- linkages between these various events, do you have any indication that your leads may be growing a little cold, and therefore that is why -- (off microphone)?

DIRECTOR FREEH: No, the leads are not growing cold. In fact, the investigation, which is continuing -- I mean aside from the fugitive investigation, we are constantly developing new evidence, a new forensic conclusion. A lot of the evidence is historical. So we feel that there is great progress being made there.

QUESTION: What does that mean?

DIRECTOR FREEH: Historical goes to background training, experience, perhaps in the military, motive, statements that he has made, basically things which are not directly connected -- (off microphone).

QUESTION: (Off microphone) -- 18 months -- (off microphone) --

QUESTION: May we ask Mr. Anderson a question?

DIRECTOR FREEH: Yes, please, go ahead.

QUESTION: Is it your hope, Mr. Anderson, with these new charges, that perhaps you might get additional cooperation from anyone who might have information about Rudolph's whereabouts?

MR. ANDERSON: We certainly hope that anyone that has information about his whereabouts will cooperate with us. We feel that this is a significant step forward. As the Director has said, it paints a picture of an individual that is not one that we believe should be admired as a hero. And we have received extensive cooperation from everyone in western North Carolina. We have been very gratified by that. But certainly, if there is anyone there who has information, we certainly hope that the nature of these charges might convince them to cooperate.

QUESTION: (Off microphone) -- someone in North Carolina who has a lot of background out there, said that there are people who believe that the reward will already go to the person in Birmingham who spotted Eric Rudolph in the truck. Is that not true? And he says they do not believe there is a reward that still exists. If that is not true, that could be dispelled -- that rumor could be dispelled.

MR. ANDERSON: The reward stands at a million dollars for information leading directly to the apprehension of Eric Rudolph.

QUESTION: (Off microphone) -- care, if I knew where he was, I wouldn't tell anybody. They're obviously supporting some of his ideas. Are you hoping this will speak directly about these charges?

MR. ANDERSON: It really makes no difference to me whether someone gives us information because they want the reward or whether they think it is the right thing to do. And the reward might not affect some people, but certainly we hope that the whole scope of everything that has taken place, up to and including the reward, will provide some information to us.

QUESTION: I am talking about the charges specifically showing that it is not just abortion targeting, but Centennial Park.

MR. ANDERSON: Well, obviously, as the Director has said, we think that it does paint a picture that is different from just someone who might have anti-abortion feelings.

QUESTION: Mr. Anderson, how do you explain that he has been able to survive in those woods in that terrain for such a long time if he is not helped by anybody?

MR. ANDERSON: Well, we think that he has, for an extensive period of time, trained himself and prepared himself for the eventuality of having to survive in the woods for a long time. Some of the historical information that the Director talked about that we have developed indicates to us that he is very adept at that, he is very comfortable in the woods.

It is not uncommon for people to be able to survive for extensive periods of time in a wooded environment like that. And obviously we think that he has, since late January of this year.

QUESTION: Even without help and 100 to 200 full-time law enforcement officers looking for him every day, with all the technical help they have, he can disappear like this into the woodwork?

MR. ANDERSON: I think he has. And if you have been there, you can understand the terrain there and how difficult an environment it is to find someone in if they do not want to be found. And so yes, I believe that it is very possible. It is a vast area. Just the Nantahal National Forest is an area of over 500,000 acres.

And so we have done an extensive search already; have covered literally miles, square miles, and may go back and do some of it again, as the Director said. The environment changes during the wintertime. And so things that we might have already done, we may redo. But we are right now going into new areas.

QUESTION: (Off microphone) -- are there enough resources on this case? Do you need more?

MR. ANDERSON: As the Director has indicated, we change the number based on the assessment of what the mission is. And I have never lacked for resources. That is the thing I can say. From either the ATF or the FBI or GBI, the Georgia Department of Corrections, it has been a remarkable example of cooperative law enforcement at its very best, I think.

QUESTION: Can we ask Ms. Reno a question?

(Off microphone) --

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: We will pursue it, get him arrested, and then take appropriate action.

One point I would like to emphasize and Ms. Yates wants to make clear, is that this is what they think he was wearing that night.

QUESTION: (Off microphone) --

MS. YATES: I really could not tell you any more than -- (off microphone) --

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Thank you very much.

QUESTION: One quick question. Will you seek the death penalty?

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I will make a decision at the time.

VOICE: Thank you.

(Whereupon, at 1:30 p.m., the press conference concluded.)