

ATLANTA OLYMPIC PARK BOMBING

Situation: Man kills two and injures over 100 at the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games.

On 27 July 1996, a lone terrorist, Eric Robert Rudolph, detonated a pipe bomb at the Centennial Olympic Park in Atlanta, Georgia. The blast killed two and injured 111. The bombing began a chain of events that concluded with a five year nation-wide manhunt.

The purpose of the attack was to "confound, anger, and embarrass" the United States Government as the world watched the 1996 Olympics. The goal of the attack was to punish the US Government for laws Rudolph believed allowed "on-demand abortions" and encouraged homosexuality.



The attack in Atlanta demonstrates the vulnerability of large groups attending special events. The attack also demonstrates the use of indiscriminate violence to further political objectives and gain worldwide media attention.



Sometime after midnight on 27 July 1996, Eric Rudolph arrived at the Centennial Olympic Park in Atlanta, Georgia. The open park had become the "town square" for the Olympic games. During the games, several hundred thousand people visited the park to eat, relax, and attend nightly concerts. On the evening of 27 July, several thousand gathered to hear a concert by Jack Mack and the Heart Attack. Very little security was present since the concert was not an official Olympic activity.

Rudolph placed a military surplus ALICE pack containing three pipe bombs and nails under a bench near the park sound tower. He then walked for approximately ten minutes before stopping at a payphone. Rudolph called 911 to warn authorities of the impending explosion but the 911 operator believed the call to be a hoax and hung up.

At approximately the same time that Rudolph placed the 911 call, Richard Jewell, a vigilant private security guard, noticed the suspicious backpack under the bench. Jewell immediately notified authorities and worked with law enforcement to clear the area. However, the bomb detonated before evacuations were complete.

Be vigilant for suspicious people, activities, and items. Improvised Explosive Devices can be disguised to look like everyday items. Immediately notify authorities if you see an item that is out of place or could represent a threat.

At 1:20 a.m. the bomb exploded sending nails and other shrapnel throughout the area. Those close to the bomb felt the concussion of the blast while those further away saw fire and smoke. Many believed the explosion was pyrotechnics for the concert; only after the arrival of first responders and seeing wounded individuals did they realize a bomb had exploded. Following the explosion, law enforcement quickly evacuated and sealed off the park.



Fortunately, the bomb had a directional charge and had been moved from the position Rudolph placed it. The bomb's new position, aimed slightly away from the crowd, helped reduce casualties. However, even with the bomb's new position and law enforcement efforts to clear the park, over one hundred people were injured. One woman attending the concert was killed when a nail struck her in the head. A Turkish television reporter running to cover the explosion died of a heart attack.

Large groups of people, and especially those attending special events, are an inviting target for terrorists. Attacks on large groups usually garner more domestic and international press attention and can help raise the status of a terrorist group. Exercise vigilance while in large groups, and if possible, identify potential escape routes.



After planting the bomb and leaving the area, Rudolph went to his staging location. Initially, Rudolph planned to detonate bombs at the Olympics on five consecutive nights. However, he claims he had second thoughts about hurting innocent people and cancelled the plan for further Olympic bombings. Rudolph detonated additional bombs constructed for the Olympics at an isolated construction site.

Rudolph quickly changed his strategy; instead of

attacking public events, he would target institutions he considered immoral. On 16 January 1997, Rudolph detonated a bomb at the Northside Family Planning facility in the Atlanta suburb of Sandy Springs. The blast caused no injuries and only limited damage. However, an hour later a second device in a dumpster near the facility exploded. The second device was designed to target federal law enforcement officials responding to the initial explosion. The secondary explosion injured six, including an Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms agent and a local newspaper reporter.

The following month, on 21 February 1997, Rudolph detonated a bomb at the Otherside Lounge, a popular establishment with Atlanta's gay and lesbian community. The explosive planted on the patio of the bar injured five persons at the club and did over \$700,000 in damage. A secondary explosive device was found outside the club by law enforcement and detonated by a police explosives robot.

Be aware of the possibility of a secondary explosion. Terrorists use secondary explosive devices to target first responders, television crews, and crowds gathered to view the initial event. If you witness a bombing, leave the immediate area as quickly and safely as possible.

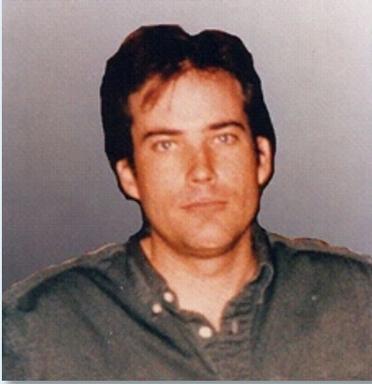
Authorities had no solid suspects after the first three bombings. However, due to similarities in bomb construction, they believed one person responsible for all three bombings in the Atlanta area.

A break in the case occurred after Rudolph's fourth bombing at the New Woman All Women Health Care Clinic in Birmingham, Alabama. In the early morning, Rudolph planted a device at the facility with the intent of killing or wounding doctors that carry out abortions.



However, an off duty police officer that provided security to the facility found the bomb and Rudolph was forced to detonate the device early. Unlike previous bombs set on timers, Rudolph stayed in the area to command detonate the device in Birmingham. The detonation immediately killed the off-duty officer and severely wounded a nurse. While leaving the scene, a witness spotted a man wearing a blond wig and driving a light colored Nissan pickup truck. The witness provided a partial license plate number and authorities were led to Eric Rudolph.

If you are in the area of a terrorist incident or witness suspicious behavior make a mental note of as many details as possible. Information on a suspicious person's description, vehicle, or activities can be very useful to law enforcement personnel.



Upon learning he was a suspect, Rudolph sought refuge in the mountains of North Carolina, an area he knew well from his childhood. Rudolph built a number of camps throughout the mountains surrounding Murphy, North Carolina and survived the next five years by foraging food in the woods, stealing crops from farmers, and dumpster raiding at local stores. Rudolph used the natural concealment of the forest to avoid helicopter searches and to perform surveillance on FBI agents sent to the area to search for him. To avoid arousing suspicion, Rudolph ventured into towns only while wearing clean clothes and after shaving. Reports indicate

Rudolph may have had support by locals that sympathized with his extreme political positions, but no one has ever been charged with aiding Rudolph.

Rudolph was finally arrested by local authorities in the early morning hours of 31 May 2003 as he attempted to raid a dumpster in Murphy, North Carolina. At the time he was unarmed and did not offer any resistance.