

OKLAHOMA CITY BOMBING

Situation: Recognition of suspicious behavior can enhance unit, organization, and facility security.

On 19 April 1995, Timothy McVeigh used a twenty-foot rental truck, loaded with approximately 5,000 pounds of explosives, to destroy the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The attack was well planned and designed to maximize death and destruction. Ultimately, the blast from the vehicle-borne improvised explosive device killed 168 people, injured 853 others, destroyed the Murrah Federal building, damaged more than three hundred surrounding buildings, and blew out countless windows and doors within a fifty-block area.



This tragic event demonstrates that the terrorist threat is multifaceted and can strike at any time or location. It also illustrates the role of terrorist planning and preparation, and the opportunity to recognize suspicious activity and potentially prevent an attack.

You should always be vigilant and cognizant of activity occurring around you. Don't let your guard down just because you are in a CONUS location.



Timothy McVeigh had long displayed signs of increasing anger towards the Federal government and tendencies toward violence. During his enlistment in the US military from 1988 to 1991, he was known to read and quote from a controversial novel, the "Turner Diaries," that describes the bombing of a government building using an explosive made from fertilizer. After leaving the military, McVeigh distributed white supremacist and anti-government literature to co-workers and sold survivalist gear at gun shows.

McVeigh's anger was inflamed by the incidents at Ruby Ridge, Idaho (August 1992) and Waco, Texas (April 1993). McVeigh considered Federal actions against the Branch Davidians as an "execution" of innocent people, including women and children. McVeigh became obsessed with what he believed to be the approaching revolution in America, and in 1994 he told friends he wanted to fire the "first shot."

Be alert to changes in behavior in your friends and co-workers. Most outlandish statements are innocent in nature, but continued inflammatory statements coupled with other types of suspicious activity might signal a real threat.

Planning and preparation for the Oklahoma City bombing started in the fall of 1994. In a six-month period in Junction City, Kansas, McVeigh assembled over 4,000 pounds of ammonium nitrate, 1,200 pounds of liquid nitromethane, 300 pounds of Tovex, and other materials needed to produce a fertilizer bomb.



During this time, his actions could have raised the suspicion of vigilant persons. To acquire the rental truck, various chemicals, explosives, and materials needed to produce and deliver the bomb, McVeigh used a series of fake ID cards and aliases. In some cases, McVeigh paid cash for items normally purchased on credit and he called numerous vendors in search of items needed to make the bomb. He stole the blasting caps used in the bombing from an explosives locker at a quarry.

McVeigh also conducted extensive surveillance of the Murrah Federal Office Building and the surrounding area. He made several trips to the area to make careful note of ingress and egress routes, places to park his getaway car, and the best place to park the rental truck. Any of these activities could have been observed by a vigilant citizen and reported to authorities.

If you witness activity that you believe is suspicious, alert installation security or local authorities immediately.



On a clear morning in April 1995, Timothy McVeigh parked the truck in front of the Murrah Building, lit a timed fuse, and walked to his get-away vehicle. At 9:02 a.m., the explosion marked the worst act of terrorism on US soil up to that time. An alert Oklahoma State Highway Patrolman stopped McVeigh about 60 miles north of Oklahoma City on I35 for driving a car with no license plates. Three days later he was identified as the target of the nationwide manhunt for the bomber. After conviction in June 1997, the 33-year old McVeigh was executed by lethal injection at the Federal Penitentiary at Terre Haute, Indiana in June 2001.

This horrific act of terrorism may have been prevented if local vendors and citizens had been more vigilant to activities occurring around them and had alerted authorities of McVeigh's suspicious behavior.

Security is everyone's responsibility. We can all do our part by being aware of our surroundings and the activities of others. By remaining vigilant and reporting suspicious behavior, you increase the ability of security and law enforcement personnel to defeat a threat before a successful attack is executed.