



Aftermath of a Christmas Day attack: federal agents seek evidence in the destruction of a Florida doctor's offices

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Explosions over Abortion

More clinic bombings spur widespread concern and controversy

The pressure on the President had been building for months. Despite a score of bombings and torchings of abortion clinics across the U.S. last year, Ronald Reagan, a firm foe of abortion, had remained silent. FBI Director William Webster had claimed that the violence was not the result of a conspiracy and thus did not constitute a form of political terrorism that his agency could investigate. Pro-choice leaders contended that the federal silence was encouraging the violence. Asked Judy Goldsmith, president of the National Organization for Women: "Where is the great advocate of law-and-order?" Then came three bombings on Christmas Day in Pensacola, Fla., and one early New Year's morning in Washington, D.C. Goldsmith dashed off a telegram to the President, urging him to condemn "the terrorist acts in the same strong terms you condemn the attacks of international terrorists upon American citizens."

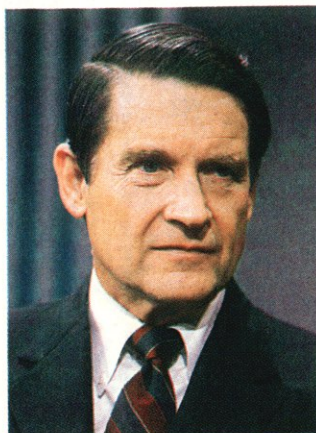
In the wake of these attacks—making 15 in the past four months—the President last week finally removed any doubt about how he viewed the abortion bombings. "I

will do all in my power to assure that the guilty are brought to justice," he said. "I condemn, in the strongest terms, those individuals who perpetrate these and all such violent, anarchist activities." He ordered Attorney General William French Smith to make sure that federal agencies work cooperatively to investigate and prosecute the crimes.

One focus of controversy has been the FBI's reluctance to label the bombings as terrorist acts and take charge of the cases. In fact, the bombings at abortion clinics have been investigated actively and effectively by the Treasury Department's Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, which has legal jurisdiction in federal cases involving explosives. It has thrown fully 500 of its 1,200 agents at the abortion-clinic incidents. The

FBI has backed BATF with help on fingerprints and psychological profiles of likely suspects. Declared Webster last week: "If someone wants to call this a terrorist act in a semantical term, I'm not going to quarrel with it. I have offered the full resources of the FBI."

The federal presence has not stemmed the antiabortion violence. There were three bomb or arson attacks on abortion facilities in 1982, two in 1983, but 24 last year. Still, the BATF agents, working with local police, have an impressive record. Nearly half of all the crimes are considered "solved," meaning that there have been either arrests or convictions. In sentencing the bombers or arsonists, judges have ignored pleas that the acts were motivated by religion or politics and harmed only property.



FBI's Webster: Is it terrorism?

CYNTHIA JOHNSON

(No one has been injured in any of the attacks.) The sentences have been stiff.

Two Texas men were sentenced to 30 years in prison for the 1982 bombings of two clinics in Florida. One of them had been joined by the other man's brother in the kidnaping of an Illinois doctor who performed abortions and the physician's wife. The three men claimed they belonged to the Army of God, a group that investigators insist had only the three members, although anonymous callers claiming responsibility for later attacks have used the same name. Curtis Anton Beseda, an unemployed roofer, confessed his guilt while on trial for four arson attacks last year on clinics in Everett and Bellingham, Wash. He said he had done the torchings "for the glory of God." He was sentenced to 20 years and ordered to pay \$298,000 for the damage he had caused. Says John Killorin, spokesman for the BATF: "We don't buy the defense that this is just property damage. The natural consequence of a bomb is loss of life."

The explosion that ripped through the Hillcrest Women's Surgi-Center in Washington, D.C., last week shattered 230 windows in two nearby apartment buildings. "It sounded like a war was going on," said one woman after watching her bedroom window collapse at 12:10 on New Year's morning. A caller claiming to be a member of the apparently nonexistent Army of God took responsibility for the bombing attack.

The Christmas explosions in Pensacola damaged the Ladies Center Inc., an abortion facility, destroyed the rented offices of Dr. William Permenter, a gynecologist who devotes only about 10% of his practice to abortions, and damaged the clinic of Dr. Bo Bagenholm, an obstetrician who performs some abortions. Permenter said he would stop his abortion practice. "You can't get an office, because people don't want their buildings burned down," he explained of the climate that has been created. "This has become a nightmare." Bagenholm, though, has found new office space and vows to carry on. Said he: "The only way I'll stop doing abortions is if the laws are changed. I'm not going to give in to terrorism. You expect right-to-lifers to be nonviolent."

BATF agents soon arrested four young people and charged them with violating federal firearms and explosive laws: Matthew Goldsby, 21, a construction worker; Kaye Wiggins, 18, his fiancée; James Simmons, 21, a glass-company worker; Kathy Simmons, 18, his wife. Wiggins said at a press conference that the bombings were meant to be "a gift to Jesus on his birthday." Pro-life leaders in Pensacola, anxious to dissociate themselves from the violence, said that the four had not been active in their movement.

Some antiabortion activists admitted to having mixed emotions about the bombings. "This isn't terrorism," insisted the Rev. David Shofner, pastor of West Pensacola Baptist Church and a frequent picketer at abortion clinics. "This is destruction of property. History will prove that the bombers will be the heroes be-



Pensacola Bombing Suspect Simmons



Wiggins facing press after arrest

"A gift to Jesus on his birthday."

cause they stopped the killing of babies." Declared John Burt, head of Our Father's House, a Pensacola home for unmarried mothers: "I don't approve of the means, but I'm glad that the killing has stopped. Upwards of 350 babies are killed each week in Pensacola."

The overwhelming majority of anti-abortion activists nationwide, however, have come out strongly and clearly against the clinic bombings. When Washington Mayor Marion Barry said that "the Jerry Falwells of the world ought to condemn this type of terrorist activity," Falwell heatedly noted that he had. Said the Moral Majority leader: "The bombings are criminal and terroristic and very damaging to the cause of the unborn." Joseph Scheidler, executive director of the Chicago-based Pro-Life Action League, has been arrested six times for illegal picketing of abortion

facilities and has written a book called *Closed: Ninety-Nine Ways to Shut Down the Abortion Industry*. Yet last week he said of the violence, "We understand why it occurs. Still, I reject it. I don't think it is helpful, or that it will work to change anything. We prefer persuasion."

While falling far short of bombings, the protest activities of antiabortion militants have become increasingly and unquestionably nasty. Patients visiting many of the roughly 800 clinics and 900 doctors' offices where abortions are performed have been harassed by pickets, who push them away from entrances for "sidewalk counseling" that often involves showing them photographs of nearly full-term fetuses. The recorded cries of infants have been sent into clinics from outside. Women seeking abortions have been videotaped, the license plates of cars delivering them have been noted and calls made to their homes. Tires of autos at the clinics have been deflated and car windows smashed. After a San Diego clinic was fire bombed last September, Director Carol Roberts got a note saying, "Death stalks at your job, murderous bitch." Said she: "Every time the phone rings, I go into sheer panic." Some protesters have berated pregnant women within the clinics while pretending to be patients who have changed their minds about an abortion.

"This may not be violence in the strict sense," says Barbara Shaw, information coordinator at Chicago Planned Parenthood, "but it is mental menace that inspires fear, and that certainly is a form of terrorism." A few of the bombings have followed intensive picketing activity; some pro-choice advocates contend that the connection is not coincidental. "People feed on their own charged rhetoric and bloody fetus posters," argues Janet Pelz, Washington State director of the National Abortion Rights Action League. "And that gives rise to the violence we are seeing nationwide."

Pro-life and pro-choice forces are bracing for competing observances on Jan. 22, the twelfth anniversary of the Supreme Court decision, *Roe vs. Wade*, that struck down most legal restrictions on abortion. The right-to-life movement hopes to draw more than 50,000 for its march up Pennsylvania Avenue. Leaders expect to meet with Reagan in the morning and distribute roses, the symbol of their crusade, to Congressmen in the afternoon. Falwell has called for a "national day of mourning" and is asking his followers to wear black armbands "in remembrance" of all aborted babies. Among the demonstrations planned by pro-choice activists is one in Florida's Broward County, where the local chapter of NOW plans a giant birthday party for the members of the Supreme Court. "We will extend our hope that they will all outlive this Administration," said Amy Greenman, president of the chapter. —By Ed Magnuson. Reported by Patricia Delaney/Washington and B. Russell Leavitt/Pensacola, with other bureaus

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