

From War Hero to American Terrorist:
How Ruby Ridge and Waco Shaped Timothy McVeigh's
Plans for Oklahoma City

Christopher Seay
Historiography

Dr. Luther Hall
November 5, 2007

Abbreviations

ATF- Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms

CEV-Combat Engineering Vehicles

F.B.I. - Federal Bureau of Investigation

SOG- Marshals Service Special Operations Group

On the morning of April 19, 1995, at approximately 9:00 a.m., a Ryder moving van pulled into a parking space directly in front of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Timothy McVeigh, a decorated hero of the Gulf War, opened the driver's side door and made his way to a car parked in the alley across the street and took off toward the interstate. Two minutes later, three thousand pounds of explosives in the back of the van ignited, destroying the Federal Building and the surrounding block. The blast left 168 dead and 700 more wounded in its wake.¹ The bombing was the culmination of Timothy McVeigh's intricate planning against the American government that had been set in motion years prior to the bombing. In 1992, the F.B.I. came under heavy scrutiny after firing on and killing the wife and son of Randy Weaver in Ruby Ridge, Idaho, who was wanted on charges of possession of illegal firearms. The eleven day stand-off was the result of Weaver failing to appear in court. This event fathered McVeigh's hatred of the American government, especially when, in the opinion of McVeigh, the courts did little to punish involved government officials. A few months after the Ruby Ridge incident, the government once again found itself in the negative spotlight when the attempted delivery of a search warrant for illegal firearms to cult leader David Koresh led to a fifty-one day siege of the Davidian Compound in Waco, Texas. The stand-off ended on April 19, 1993, when a F.B.I. task force attacked the compound, resulting in the compound becoming engulfed in flames, killing all of Koresh's followers who remained in the building. The resulting trial, much like the Ruby Ridge case, did

little to punish involved officials. After the events of the Waco tragedy in 1993, McVeigh looked for the chance to fight back against the government who, according to extremists such as McVeigh, had murdered over seventy men, women, and children at Waco. Justice had to be served, and McVeigh thought he had the answer. He, along with friends Terry Nichols and Michael Fortier, developed a plan to destroy the Murrah Federal Building, where the orders for Waco originated, in hopes of starting the next American Revolution. Even though large amounts of information have been obtained since the Oklahoma City bombing, one question remains under debate: how could a man go from being a decorated war hero and model citizen to a mass murderer and a terrorist? The process was obviously a slow one, but the evidence is clear. The tragedies McVeigh experienced during his stint in the Gulf War laid the foundation, the F.B.I. shootings at Ruby Ridge fueled his hatred for the government, but the overwhelming catalyst was the way the U.S. government handled the situation in Waco, Texas. The government's actions at Waco and subsequent failure to discipline those involved led Timothy McVeigh to develop plans for his attack on the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City.

Timothy McVeigh joined the Army in May of 1988, shortly after his twentieth birthday. He joined the military in order to see the world and get away from the small town environment he had grown up in all his life in Pendleton, New York, just outside of Buffalo. McVeigh later told a reporter at *Time Magazine*, "I thought I had led a pretty much sheltered life and I pretty much had."² At the time of his recruitment, the United States biggest outside threat was a deteriorating Soviet Union and the non-threat of the Cold War. The fact America was in a time of relative peace encouraged McVeigh to leave his small town and travel to Fort Benning, Georgia for basic training. While in Georgia, McVeigh met and befriended Terry Nichols and Michael Fortier. The

three men bonded after expressing similar concerns in relation to the ever increasing influence of the government, which were advanced by the heavy tax increases of the late 1980s. After basic training in Georgia, McVeigh, Nichols, and Fortier were transferred together to Fort Riley, Kansas.

During McVeigh's stay at Fort Riley, the dynamics of the world power struggle shifted. The Cold War dissipated with the destruction of the Berlin Wall in 1989, but a new threat emerged from the Middle East. Iraq and its dictatorial ruler, Saddam Hussein, were furious with the oil policies of Kuwait, the country on Iraq's southern border. Kuwait had lowered its price for oil, which required Iraq to sell its oil for less than what Hussein wanted. Also, Hussein suspected the Kuwaitis were stealing oil from Iraq by using angled pipes at the border. In August of 1990, Hussein ordered troops to march to the capitol of Kuwait, Kuwait City, and annex the country as part of Iraq. The U.S. military stepped in to defend Kuwait, and McVeigh and his company were deployed to the Arabian Desert.³ McVeigh saw significant fighting time during the brief thirty days of conflict and would later admit he had been responsible for the deaths of two Iraqi soldiers. Years later, McVeigh told a reporter, "There were two. They were firing on us...That was the second day of conflict."⁴ The impact of taking the lives of these two men was evident by McVeigh's newfound views on the government and his belief in its tyranny.

McVeigh stated he saw no benefit to the U.S. for fighting the Gulf War, and the people he was fighting against were normal people who were being forced to fight against their own will. He saw a form of hypocrisy in the way the American government treated other nationalities in comparison to how they treated American citizens. In an essay written in 1998, while still maintaining his innocence in the Oklahoma City bombing, McVeigh questioned the right

of the government to justly attack other nations, stating:

"Whether you wish to admit it or not, when you approve...of the bombing of foreign targets by the U.S. military, you are approving of acts morally equivalent to the Oklahoma City Bombing. The only difference is that this nation is not going to see any foreign casualties appear on the cover of Newsweek magazine."⁵

During the war, McVeigh began to see the Iraqis as real people with families, jobs, and lives outside of the fighting. He could not see how it right to kill men and women in a war with no direct benefit to the American people. McVeigh's anger led him to couple his newfound view of the government with ideas he had encountered during his military training. While stationed at Fort Riley, McVeigh read the book *The Turner Diaries*. The novel is an apocalyptic tale depicting a group of right-wing extremists overthrowing the American government by way of destroying a renowned federal building. McVeigh was enamored with the book, often encouraging Nichols and Fortier to read it. Even though the book may have served as the blueprint for the Oklahoma City attack, McVeigh was not at the point of feeling the need to attack the government when he read the book. The war in Kuwait increased McVeigh's distrust of the government. In his mind, if the government could treat foreign people who were "no different than you" with such disdain, then how long until the government began to treat American citizens in the same way?⁶ McVeigh's question was answered in August of 1992 at Ruby Ridge, Idaho.

In January of 1991, Randy Weaver, a former Green Beret and a known Aryan supporter, was arrested by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) in Idaho for the possession of a sawed-off shotgun. The next day when Weaver was taken before a federal judge to secure a court date, he was told he would have to cover the government's court costs as well as his own. In order to pay all the bills, Weaver would lose his property. On February 20, he failed to show up at court because the summons the Weavers had received stated March 30 as the court date

instead of the February date. Nevertheless, the judge declared Weaver a federal fugitive and issued a warrant for his arrest. The ATF was hesitant to proceed due to a series of letters written by Randy Weaver's wife, Vicki Weaver, to the U.S. Attorney's office in the month prior to the court date. The letters contained clear warnings that the Weavers would not surrender to federal authorities peacefully with statements such as, "The tyrants' blood will flow," and "Whether we live or die, we will not bow to your evil commandments."⁷ The Marshals Service Special Operations Group (SOG) was asked to carry out surveillance on the Weaver home in Ruby Ridge. During this time, Dr. Walter Stenning, a psychologist, detected that Weaver believed the end of the world was near and would fight to the death against the "evil that wants to take over the world."⁴ Neighbors of the Weavers confirmed this belief after eating dinner with the family a few days following the issuing of the arrest warrant. Beverly and Ed Torrence lived adjacent to the Weaver property and had been told by Randy that he was not going to be arrested by anyone and that he would "take some with me" if he had to fight.⁹

In October of 1991, after months of surveillance, a surrender letter was drafted and sent to the ATF for approval. The letter was rejected by the U.S. Attorney's office before it was ever sent out, and negotiations stalled because the harsh winter months had snowed in the Weaver's property, making surveillance near impossible. In the spring of 1992, the tension was mounting as more friends of the Weavers confirmed that violence would ensue if anyone tried to apprehend Randy. According to Allan Jeppeson, a longtime friend of Randy Weaver, the whole family was armed and ready to attack any federal officer who trespassed onto the property.¹⁰ In late March, a plan was brought forth regarding an assault on the Weaver house. Initially, apprehension was abundant because of the Weaver children and the fact that Vicki Weaver was

soon due to deliver another child. The case was transferred to the Enforcement Division in the SOG, and an undercover operation was prepared for the fall of 1992. Before the operation, the SOG felt it was best to visit the site and update their current information on the land surrounding the Weaver's cabin.

On August 21, 1992, several US Marshals moved onto the property of Randy Weaver to survey the area. Due to Weaver's military background, and the numerous warnings from friends and neighbors, the Marshals carried machine guns with them on their surveillance run. Early in the morning, they were detected by the family dog, which prompted Randy, his son Sammy, and a family friend, Kevin Harris, to investigate the commotion outside. Armed with guns, the three men followed their pet down into the valley below the property. After a short chase, the Marshals stopped and took a defensive position. What occurred next is disputed, but according to Randy Weaver, one of the agents shot the dog, which in turn prompted Sammy to start firing on the man responsible for his dog's death. The ensuing firefight killed both Sammy and US Marshal William Degan. Weaver and Harris retreated back to their cabin. The next day, a federal sniper named Lon Horuichi fired shots into the cabin, injuring Randy Weaver and killing Vicki Weaver as she held her newborn child. Horuichi was attempting to shoot at Harris when he killed Mrs. Weaver, but the incident would haunt the government in the days to come. For the next ten days, Randy and his family barricaded themselves inside their home, never coming out. Meanwhile, the F.B.I. antagonized Weaver by saying such things as "Good morning, Mrs. Weaver," and "Why don't you send your children out for pancakes, Mrs. Weaver?" The F.B.I. claimed they did not know the circumstances surrounding the sniper shooting, but bugs would later be found under the house that proved that the F.B.I. could hear everything inside the cabin at

the time Vicki Weaver was shot. The standoff finally ended when the F.B.I. called in Weaver's old commanding officer from his days in Vietnam to coerce him outside and into the custody of federal agents.

During the siege, Timothy McVeigh followed the story intently. He was appalled at the actions the government took against the Weaver family and could not believe the amount of violence exerted toward American citizens.¹¹ However, the greatest shock of the Ruby Ridge incident came months after the standoff ended. Randy Weaver was acquitted of all charges during the siege due to self-defense, however, he was found guilty on the original charge of possession of illegal firearms. Subsequently, he served three months in prison for his crime. McVeigh was one of many outraged at the sentence, believing Weaver had endured enough with the loss of his wife and child. To make matters worse, when Lon Horiuchi was charged with voluntary manslaughter by a local prosecutor, the indictment was moved to Federal Court, where the charges were soon dismissed because the court believed "that shooting [at] Harris was necessary and proper under the circumstances."¹² The court also believed Horiuchi never saw Vicki Weaver and never intended to harm her. Consequently, all charges were dropped and he was released from custody. McVeigh was infuriated with the results of the trial, and in a letter written to Fox News in 2001, he indicated that the Ruby Ridge siege was inspiration for the bombing in Oklahoma City. He wrote, "The bombing was a retaliatory strike; a counter attack, for the cumulative raids (and subsequent violence and damage) that federal agents had participated in over the preceding years."¹³ While Ruby Ridge was a vital part in McVeigh's growing disgust of the U.S. government, the tipping point would come a few months later at a small town in central

Texas.

Reports began surfacing in early 1993 pertaining to instances of polygamy and child rape within the militant, religious cult of the Branch Davidians near Waco, Texas. According to sources, their leader, David Koresh, had convinced the men of his congregation that only he should be allowed to engage in sexual activity with the women and only he should be allowed to reproduce children. Furthermore, he convinced the women and men of the Branch Davidians to allow him to have sex with their young teenage daughters, as a blessing and good forbearance for their child's life. To the Branch Davidians, David Koresh was the Messiah sent from God to welcome the end times on Earth, and Koresh frequently abdicated this thought by preaching on the book of Revelation and topics such as the Seven Seals of the Great Tribulation. He was constantly preparing his congregation for the end of the world. At the same time, the government was looking for a reason to shut the cult down in order to deter another mass suicide such as the one that occurred in Jonestown, Guyana with the People's Church only fifteen years earlier. On February 28, 1993, ATF agents loaded into cattle trailers and made their way to the Branch Davidian compound on the outskirts of Waco, Texas. The mission was to issue an arrest and search warrant for possession of illegal weapons. As the convoy approached, they were met with gunfire from inside the compound and forced to retreat. The resulting firefight concluded with four ATF agents and at least six members of the Branch Davidians dead. Koresh, who was wounded in the hip during the shootout, locked himself and his congregation inside the compound and refused to surrender, beginning the longest stand-off in law enforcement history.

Negotiations began immediately. On the afternoon of the 28th, F.B.I. Chief Negotiator Byron Sage began to talk to Koresh about the release of at least the children inside the

compound. The following day, the F.B.I. allowed for Koresh to broadcast his religious beliefs over a radio station out of Dallas in exchange for the release of ten children, a procedure that would become routine over the next few days. March 1 marked the first day federal tanks arrived outside the compound. The combat engineering vehicles (CEVs) surrounded the compound and made Koresh uneasy to the point he threatened to cut off all negotiations until the vehicles' perimeter was moved farther away from the building. Even after complying with Koresh's wishes, the F.B.I. gained little ground over the next few weeks. During this time, agents learned that due to the apocalyptic beliefs of the Davidians, enough supplies were stored in the compound to last over a year. Desperate for an edge in the negotiations, all power was cut off from the compound in addition to all phone lines except for the one connected to the negotiators. Koresh was infuriated, and subsequently stopped all communication with the negotiators until power was finally restored a few days later. Searching for another advantage, the F.B.I. began to play music and religious messages over loudspeakers at night to keep the Davidians from sleeping, in hopes that the comfort level inside would deteriorate enough that Koresh's congregation would call for action from their leader. The strategy seemed to have the opposite effect, however, as Koresh seemed to grow more distant from the negotiators and firmer in his demands.¹⁴

Meanwhile, on March 15, Janet Reno was sworn in as the new Attorney General and immediately focused the majority of her attention on the events in Waco. F.B.I. director William Sessions briefed her on the current events at the compound and handed her the plans for an assault on the Davidians as early as late March. Reno, afraid for the safety of the children inside, vetoed the assault plans and urged Sessions to get as many people out as possible through

negotiations. Even though Sessions would not admit it to Reno at the time, later investigations would prove negotiations had stalled by the end of March, and the F.B.I was using primarily tactical training to lure any hostages they could out of the compound. These tactics included routinely shutting off power, moving the CEVs closer in toward the compound in order to make Koresh anxious, and continually blaring loud music at all times of the day to create a sense of panic outside the compound. The F.B.I.'s actions caused several groups to stand outside the property lines protesting the agency's procedures, including Timothy McVeigh.

McVeigh had made the journey down to Waco in late March to protest the government's dealings with the Davidians. He was interviewed by a local college paper where he vented about the excess of the government's control over citizens and the events at Ruby Ridge. Shortly after the interview, he left the area and headed to Michigan to meet up with Terry Nichols. The two were set to return to Waco in mid-April. In the meantime, added pressure was being applied to Reno everyday concerning the assault on the compound. She continued to question the motives of the F.B.I. director by asking "Why now?" and "Why this?"¹⁵ Sessions believed the longer the wait, the greater the chance of a mass suicide. According to the director of the F.B.I., the only way to guarantee that the most children left the compound alive was to move quickly. Reno asked to see documentation on the assault and needed confirmation the gas was not harmful to the children inside the compound. On April 14, Dr. Harry Salem, a toxicologist, informed Reno that the gas to be used during the assault was harmless to the children and pregnant women that might be inside the compound. After continued deliberation, Reno received the documentation she had asked for on April 16, and the next day she approved the gassing plan. Tanks moved in the following Monday.

The morning of April 19, McVeigh and Nichols were getting prepared to make the long trip to Texas to join the other protesters at the Davidians' property. That same morning, the F.B.I. tried one last time to get David Koresh to surrender. They called the landline and informed the Davidians of the imminent tear-gas assault and then, over a loudspeaker, ordered the congregation to come outside and be arrested. The campaign proved fruitless and the CEVs moved forward with nozzles attached to the end of their booms and proceeded to emit gas into the compound. McVeigh was forced to watch, in horror, as the events unfolded on Nichols' television in Michigan. He watched as the gas raid was met with heavy gunfire from the Davidians, who were shooting from inside the compound. Once all the tear-gas was used, the F.B.I. called for more to be delivered from Houston. McVeigh, along with many others who were watching the events unfold on television, saw the CEVs tear holes into the sides of the compound through which tear gas bombs were launched. Eventually, due to the wind, the gas blew upward from the compound and made the compound barely visible from the sky. A little after midday, several fires were set by the Davidians in different parts of the building. The men manning the CEVs noticed the fires, and negotiators began to order Koresh to lead his people to safety. The advice went unheeded and the building became engulfed with flames. Perhaps the most harrowing sight of the whole ordeal was when the bell tower of the compound came crashing down due to the flames. A few men and women were able to evacuate before the fire overwhelmed the compound, but most of Koresh's followers stayed behind and died in the flames. In all, seventy-four Davidians died in the fire, twenty-five of them children. McVeigh, along with the nation, watched the whole situation unfold on television.¹⁶

In the following months, the government went to great lengths to explain how everything

had gone so terribly wrong. The F.B.I. invited ten outside experts to review the case and make their conclusions about how the situation in Waco should have been handled. Only one of the ten laid the fault at the F.B.I.'s feet. Dr. Alan Stone, a professor of psychiatry and law at Harvard University, published his report in November of 1993 and presented five recommendations for the F.B.I. in future situations with "unconventional groups."¹⁷ They were:

1. The F.B.I. needs to make use of past experience.
2. The F.B.I. needs a clear policy on third-party negotiators/intermediaries.
3. The F.B.I. and the Justice Department need a systematic policy for dealing with information overload.
4. The F.B.I. needs a better knowledge base about the medical consequences of CS gas.
5. The F.B.I. needs a specific policy for dealing with unconventional groups.¹⁸

Each of these recommendations points toward what ultimately caused the failure at Waco, the F.B.I.'s failure to coordinate the negotiations with the tactical procedures. Stone was also convinced the F.B.I.'s tactics, especially the CEVs closing in around the compound, prompted Koresh to strengthen his position and furthered his plans for mass suicide. Stone wrote, "The commander on the ground... disregarded those experts [negotiators] and tried to assert control and demonstrate to Koresh that they were in charge."¹⁹ The plan backfired and only served to convince Koresh's congregation of his promises that the end times were at hand. Stone's report was not as devastating as it may have appeared. The Justice Department's hearing found no fault on the part of any of the Department's employees, and Reno was painted as a hero when she went public and claimed full responsibility for the events. However, the Stone report did find supporters in the militia, where it helped to serve as a rallying cry against a tyrannical government who would not take responsibility for its actions.

In his testimony at the Oklahoma City bombing trial, Michael Fortier stated that after the tragedy at Waco, McVeigh traveled to his home in Kingman, Arizona to discuss the events that

had occurred in Texas. Initially, Timothy McVeigh believed the Davidians set the fire, but he was still upset at what he saw as an unprovoked attack against the Branch Davidians. Fortier stated in his testimony, "We both concluded that the federal government had intentionally attacked those people and maybe not intentionally started the fire."²⁰ He would later state that during the conversation, both of them concluded the government could have potentially murdered the Davidians through their actions on the nineteenth by pushing them to the brink of suicide. A few months later, McVeigh returned to Fortier's house with a new videotape titled Waco, The Big Lie. The tape argued the case that the government started the fire in the compound and then tried to cover up the incident. Believing what they saw, McVeigh and Fortier both agreed someone needed to be held accountable, and they began talking about establishing a militia group to fight the "New World Order." New World Order was a conspiracy devoted to the belief the United Nations (UN) would one day dismantle all of the world's governments and the world would come under the reign of a dictatorship led by the UN council. McVeigh began working gun shows to gain connections to the underground militia movement while simultaneously giving Fortier stolen weapons to sell out of his house. Some of the money went to Fortier, but the rest McVeigh either used on himself or put into an account to buy explosives.

In the late spring and early summer of 1994, McVeigh began to set off small bombs in the Arizona desert outside of Kingman. Fortier told prosecutors at the trial that McVeigh began to stockpile small amounts of explosives in the storage units outside of Kingman in late spring. At one point, McVeigh brought Fortier to the sheds to help load boxes into Terry Nichols' truck, and McVeigh told Fortier of his plan to blow up a federal building. McVeigh had not yet decided on which building to target, but he knew it was going to be in the Midwest. In early September,

Fortier received a visit from McVeigh in which he told Fortier he had found a building located in Oklahoma City, and he would need his help in moving the explosives from the storage units in Arizona to a storage unit outside of Herington, Kansas. The building McVeigh chose was the easily accessible Murrah Federal Building, the last place where orders for Waco had been issued. McVeigh planned the attack for April 19, 1995, the two-year anniversary of Waco.

The events from September 1994 to April 1995 paint a clear picture of McVeigh's determination to see his plan go through. In late September, McVeigh bought one ton of ammonium nitrate, the fertilizer that would become the key ingredient in his bomb. In early October, he stole blasting caps and dynamite from a quarry in Marion, Kansas. Two weeks later, he purchased a second ton of ammonium nitrate. All of these explosives were stored at a storage unit near Herington, Kansas. Also during this time, McVeigh and Nichols began timing a route from the Murrah Federal Building to a safe spot in the city. At the end of October, McVeigh purchased nitromethane, a high octane racing fuel, at a race track near Dallas, Texas. Afterward, he traveled back to Kingman, where he stayed for the next two months, with the exception of two weeks when he toured gun shows and visited Nichols. While in Arizona, he experimented with the mixture of fertilizer and fuel until he finally got the percentages right and could make the bomb he had envisioned. After taking Fortier to see the Murrah Federal Building in December, McVeigh left Fortier and lived with Nichols for a month, but he eventually made his way back to Arizona, where he stayed with Fortier until the end of March. In early April, McVeigh moved into a hotel room in Kingman shortly before Michael Fortier told McVeigh he wanted out of the bombing plan. McVeigh left Kingman on April 13, and spent the time up to the bombing living out of a hotel in Junction City, Oklahoma.

Furthermore, McVeigh reserved a rental from the local Ryder Truck' company under the name "Robert Kling" and purchased a 1977 Mercury Marquis to park across the street from the Murrah Building and use as a getaway car. On April 18, McVeigh and Nichols loaded the back of the truck with drums of nitromethane and bags of fertilizer before going to a local state park to mix the explosives and wire the bomb. The next morning, McVeigh parked the Ryder truck in front of the Murrah Federal Building at 9:00 A.M., lit the fuses, and walked briskly away to the '77 Marquis parked across the street. At 9:02, the bomb ignited and took with it the front of the building.²² Casualties quickly rose and the final number settled at 168 dead, with 19 of the dead being children, and 759 injured.²³

McVeigh did not make it far from Oklahoma City. Later that day, he was stopped by a Perry County sheriff's deputy going north on I-35 for failure to properly display license plates. He was arrested for no vehicle registration and having a concealed, unregistered firearm and placed in the Perry County jail. Two days later, McVeigh was pinpointed as John Doe #1 in connection with the bombing and the judge moved to hold him without bail. Over the course of the following months, evidence began to mount as connections were made. McVeigh was charged with the bombing, and Terry Nichols was charged as his accomplice. Michael Fortier made a deal with the F.B.I. to testify against both men in exchange for a lesser sentence. Due to the uproar in Oklahoma, the trial was moved to Denver, Colorado where McVeigh, on June 13, 1997, was found guilty of the bombing and given the death penalty.²⁴ Terry Nichols was treated with more leniency than McVeigh and received life in prison with no parole. On June 11, 2001, in front of a closed circuit TV audience in Oklahoma, Timothy McVeigh was executed by lethal injection.

McVeigh never showed remorse for his actions in April of 1995. Instead, he persisted

that his actions were warranted because of an increasingly militant government which served only its own selfish motives and never showed affection for the people it claimed to govern. In his interview with *Time* magazine in 1996, while still maintaining his innocence, McVeigh stated, "Each one of these events [Ruby Ridge and Waco] that I've named are symptoms...And no one is paying attention to the disease."²⁵ The disease, according to McVeigh, was the government, which was too large and obtrusive. The only way to stop the disease was to either take control of the current form of government or start over from scratch, like in *The Turner Diaries*. However, McVeigh's reasoning changed after his conviction. He began to portray the bombing as a retaliatory attack, not the start to another American Revolution. In his interview with Ed Bradley he stated, "If the government is the teacher, then violence would be an acceptable option."²⁶ In his letter to Fox News, shortly before his execution he wrote, "Federal actions grew increasingly militaristic and violent, to the point where at Waco, our government--like the Chinese--was deploying tanks against its own citizens."²⁷ McVeigh believed he had to fight back against the government before the American population was no longer under a democracy but rather a military-state. His actions in Oklahoma City were justified in his mind as being necessary to control the government that sought to control him. He felt as if the American government was acting outside of its jurisdiction without being properly controlled. In a statement to Fox News, he said:

"I waited two years from "Waco" for non-violent "checks and balances" built into our system to correct the abuse of power we were seeing in federal actions against citizens. The Executive; Legislative; and Judicial branches not only concluded that the government did nothing wrong (leaving the door open for another "Waco" to happen again), they actually gave awards and bonus pay to those agents involved..."²⁸

The way the government handled the aftermath of the Waco Siege weighed heavily on Timothy

McVeigh, so much so that he was left, in his viewpoint, with only one option: fight the government that refused to fight for their own people. No one will say his actions were right, but McVeigh was never alone in his outrage at the government's actions after Ruby Ridge and Waco.

The preceding was not written to justify the actions of Timothy McVeigh on that fateful morning in April of 1995, but rather to stir up memories of events that are being too quickly forgotten by today's generation. Timothy McVeigh's actions were unspeakable and horrendous, and he has since come to represent the evil side of the militia movement of the early 1990s. The justification he sought after his conviction was never given to him, and rightly so, because there is simply no justification for the murder of 168 innocent people. Every interview he gave and every letter he wrote up to his execution were riddled with rationalizations and reasoning behind his motives for the bombing. He never showed sympathy to the victims' families and never apologized for the bombing. Additionally, he continued to antagonize the government by condemning the bombings in Iraq and Somalia, and he made the American public livid by refusing to acknowledge the horrific nature of his act. Even to the end, McVeigh was unfaltering in his convictions. In his final written statement, he used a poem by William Ernest Henley to explain his commitment to his actions. The poem goes as follows:

"Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul (McVeigh's emphasis)

In the fell clutch of circumstance I have
not winced nor cried aloud. Under the
bludgeonings of chance My head is
bloody and unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade, And
yet the menace of the years Finds, and
shall find, me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll, I am
the master of my fate;
I am the captain of my soul."²⁹

Timothy McVeigh was a product of the militant world he surrounded himself with and died as an American terrorist.

Bibliography

- Associated Press. "McVeigh Vents On '60 Minutes'" <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2000/03/13/national/printable171231.shtml>; May 11, 2001
- Boyer, Peter J. "The Children of Waco." <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/waco/childrenofwacol.html>; May 15, 1995.
- Cole, Patrick. "A Look Back in Time: Interview with Timothy McVeigh" March 30, 1996. <http://www.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,109478,00.html>
- C Danforth, John. "Waco: The Inside Story." *Center for Studies on New Religions*. Fall 2000
"Gulf War Information." <http://www.indepthinfo.com/iraq/invitation.shtml>
- Mallonee, S. "Physical Injuries and Fatalities Resulting From the Oklahoma City Bombing." <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sites/entrez?cmd>
- McVeigh, Timothy. "February 1992 letter to the Union-Sun & Journal" *Union Sun & Journal*. Feb. 1992.
- McVeigh, Timothy. "March 1998 message by Timothy McVeigh." www.maglietta.org/mcveigh/letters/Essay1.htm
- McVeigh, Timothy. "Final Statement of Timothy McVeigh." <http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/mcveigh/meveighinvictus.html>; June 11, 2001.
- McVeigh, Timothy. "Timothy McVeigh's Letter to Fox News." <http://www.digital-exp.com/doco/TimothyMcVeigh.html>; April 26, 2001.
- McVeigh, Timothy. "Self-defense letter." *Buffalo News*. Feb. 16, 1992.
"Ruby Ridge." http://www.bookrags.com/Ruby_ridge
- "Sentencing of Timothy James McVeigh." *United States of America v. Timothy James McVeigh*. June 13, 1997 www.cnn.com/US/9703/okc.trial/transcripts/june/061397.pm.txt
- Stone, Dr. Alan A. "Report and Recommendations Concerning the Handling of Incidents Such As the Branch Davidian Standoff in Waco, Texas." November 10, 1993
- "Testimony of Michael Fortier." *United States of America v. Timothy James McVeigh*. May 12, 1997. www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/mcveigh/mfortiertestimony.html
- "The Oklahoma City Bombing and the Trial of Timothy McVeigh: A Chronology." <http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/mcveigh/mcveighchrono.html>

- ¹ Mallonee, S. "Physical Injuries and Fatalities Resulting From the Oklahoma City Bombing."
- ² Cole, Patrick. "A Look Back in Time: Interview with Timothy McVeigh" March 30, 1996.
- ³ Gulf War Information." <http://www.indepthinfo.com/iraq/invitation.shtml>
- ⁴ Cole, Patrick. "A Look Back in Time: Interview with Timothy McVeigh" March 30, 1996.
- ⁵ McVeigh, Timothy. "March 1998 message by Timothy McVeigh."
- ⁶ Cole, Patrick. "A Look Back in Time: Interview with Timothy McVeigh."
- ⁷ "Ruby Ridge." http://www.bookrags.com/Ruby_ridge
- ⁸ "Ruby Ridge." http://www.bookrags.com/Ruby_ridge
- ⁹ "Ruby Ridge." http://www.bookrags.com/Ruby_ridge
- ¹⁰ "Ruby Ridge." http://www.bookrags.com/Ruby_ridge
- ¹¹ "The Oklahoma City Bombing and the Trial of Timothy McVeigh: A Chronology."
- ¹² "Ruby Ridge." http://www.bookrags.com/Ruby_ridge
- ¹³ McVeigh, Timothy. "Timothy McVeigh's Letter to Fox News."
- ¹⁴ C Danforth, John. "Waco: The Inside Story." *Center for Studies on New Religions*. Fall 2000
- ¹⁵ Boyer, Peter J. "The Children of Waco." <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/waco/childrenofwacol.html>; May 15, 1995.
- ¹⁶ "The Oklahoma City Bombing and the Trial of Timothy McVeigh: A Chronology."
- ¹⁷ Stone, Dr. Alan A. "Report and Recommendations Concerning the Handling of Incidents Such As the Branch Davidian Standoff In Waco, Texas." November 10, 1993
- ¹⁸ Stone, Dr. Alan A. "Report and Recommendations Concerning the Handling of Incidents Such As the Branch Davidian Standoff in Waco, Texas." November 10, 1993
- ¹⁹ Stone, Dr. Alan A. "Report and Recommendations Concerning the Handling of Incidents Such As the Branch Davidian Standoff in Waco, Texas." November 10, 1993
- ²⁰ "Testimony of Michael Fortier." *United States of America v. Timothy James McVeigh*. May 12, 1997.
- ²¹ "Testimony of Michael Fortier." *United States of America v. Timothy James McVeigh*. May 12, 1997.
- ²² Oklahoma City Bombing and the Trial of Timothy McVeigh: A Chronology."
- ²³ Mallonee, S. "Physical Injuries and Fatalities Resulting From the Oklahoma City Bombing."
- ²⁴ "Sentencing of Timothy James McVeigh." *United States of America v. Timothy James McVeigh*. June 13, 1997
- ²⁵ Cole, Patrick. "A Look Back in Time: Interview with Timothy McVeigh" March 30, 1996.
- ²⁶ Associated Press. "McVeigh Vents On'60 Minutes"
- ²⁷ McVeigh, Timothy. "Timothy McVeigh's Letter to Fox News."
- ²⁸ McVeigh, Timothy. "Timothy McVeigh's Letter to Fox News."
- ²⁹ McVeigh, Timothy. "Final Statement of Timothy McVeigh."