

Forensic Evidence Solves String of Bombings

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Following a rash of bombings that terrorized the Atlanta area, investigators are closing in on Eric Robert Rudolph, a carpenter and Atlanta resident. A break came when investigators were able to establish a link between the materials used in several unsolved bombings. Three bombings, two targeted at women's clinics and the other at an Olympic venue, all possessed the same nails and steel plates. The steel plates have been traced back to a plant in North Carolina where a friend of the suspect is employed, and nails matching those used in the bombings were found in a storage facility that Rudolph has been renting. Investigators are now engaging in a manhunt to locate Rudolph.

Bombing investigations are very challenging to law enforcement officials for several reasons. First of all, the perpetrator can provide himself with an ample amount of time to leave the premises, unlike other forms of homicide. Furthermore, the bomber is not rushed to conceal his actions and is therefore much less likely to make errors leading to his capture. Thirdly, much of the would-be evidence is destroyed in the explosion and in some cases subsequent fire. Perhaps, most significant is that the criminal does not necessarily have to even know his victims. In this particular case, Rudolph seemed to be striking out against what he deemed to be unholy institutions and perhaps even society in general.

Although this man was able to kill several and injure hundreds of individuals, we are lucky that he was caught so quickly. It was a mistake for Rudolph, and a huge break for law enforcement, to use the same materials repeatedly. To house these materials in storage facility under his name was also very foolish, and fortunate for investigators. The

Unabomber, who is mentioned in the article as well, was able to avoid capture for decades by continually switching the materials he used in his bombs.

With all bombing investigations, the criminalist will attempt to create links. These links may be physical, psychological or even geographical. Any pattern or common threads between crimes are always very important, especially in bombing and arson investigations. In the case discussed above, these links were luckily enough to solve a string of bombings.

Source: <http://www.cnn.com/US/9802/27/rudolph.update/index.html>