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FRIDAY, APRIL 8, 2005 (202) 514-2008
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ERIC ROBERT RUDOLPH TO PLEAD GUILTY TO SERIAL BOMBING ATTACKS IN ATLANTA AND BIRMINGHAM; WILL RECEIVE LIFE SENTENCES

As Part of Plea Agreement, Rudolph Disclosed Locations of Hidden Bomb and Dynamite
WASHINGTON, D.C. - The Department of Justice announced today that Eric Robert Rudolph will plead guilty to federal charges stemming from a series of bombings, including the fatal attacks at Centennial Olympic Park in Atlanta during the 1996 Olympics and at a Birmingham, Alabama family planning clinic in 1998.

Rudolph, 38, of Murphy, North Carolina, was charged in the Northern District of Georgia for the bombing attack at Centennial Olympic Park on July 27, 1996, which killed Olympic spectator Alice Hawthorne and seriously injured more than 100 other people; the bombing attack on a Sandy Springs, Georgia, family planning clinic on Jan. 16, 1997, which injured more than 50 people; and the bombing attack on a Midtown Atlanta nightclub, the Otherside Lounge, on Feb. 21, 1997, which injured five people. Rudolph was also indicted in the Northern District of Alabama for the bombing attack on a Birmingham family planning clinic on Jan. 29, 1998, which killed Birmingham Police Officer Robert Sanderson and critically injured nurse Emily Lyons.

Rudolph is scheduled to plead guilty to the Northern District of Alabama indictment Wednesday, April 13 at 9:30 AM Eastern Time (8:30 AM Central Time) before U.S. District Judge Lynwood Smith at the federal courthouse in Birmingham. On the same day, the U.S. Marshal's Service will transport Rudolph to Atlanta, where he is scheduled to plead guilty at 3 PM Eastern Time before U.S. District Judge Charles A. Pannell, Jr., at the federal courthouse in Atlanta.

Rudolph has signed agreements with the U.S. Attorneys' Offices in Birmingham and Atlanta in which he agreed to plead guilty to the three Atlanta bombings and the Birmingham bombing and agreed to waive all appeals. The plea agreements provide for multiple life sentences for Rudolph without the possibility of parole.

Pursuant to the plea agreements, Rudolph disclosed to the government the existence and locations of more than 250 pounds of dynamite buried in several locations in the Western North Carolina area. Three of the locations were relatively near populated areas, including one location where Rudolph buried a fully constructed dynamite bomb with a detached detonator. As required by the plea agreements, Rudolph described the locations of those dangerous materials and provided other information necessary for the government to conduct render-safe procedures.

In response to this information, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) dispatched teams to locate the dynamite and hidden bomb. The search teams - with the assistance of other federal agencies and state and local law enforcement in Western North Carolina - located the bomb, which contained approximately 20 to 25 pounds of dynamite, hidden in close proximity to a road, homes and businesses. ATF and FBI explosives experts removed the bomb components and the dynamite was disposed of safely. Agents located dynamite and bomb components at four other locations and safely disposed of that dynamite as well.

"The many victims of Eric Rudolph's terrorist attacks in Atlanta and Birmingham can rest assured that Rudolph will spend the rest of his life behind bars," said Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales. "The best interests of justice are served by resolution of this case and by the skillful operation that secured the dangerous explosives buried in North Carolina."

U.S. Attorneys Alice H. Martin of the Northern District of Alabama and David E. Nahmias of the Northern District of Georgia stated: "If accepted by the courts, Eric Robert Rudolph's guilty pleas to having committed the Birmingham and Atlanta bombings will resolve these cases with certainty and finality, and hopefully bring some closure to the many victims of the bombings. The plea agreements will ensure that Rudolph spends the rest of his life in federal prison without the possibility of parole. Importantly, the plea agreements allowed the government to locate and render safe a buried bomb and large amounts of hidden dynamite that posed a significant threat to public safety."

"Justice has prevailed," said Director Carl J. Truscott, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. "Four heinous bombings resulted in two deaths and hundreds injured, and the serial bomber Eric Rudolph will spend the rest of his life behind bars for them."

"For nearly nine years, state, local and federal law enforcement have pursued these investigations with great persistence and fortitude," said Federal Bureau of Investigation Director Robert Mueller. "The fruits of their efforts will finally be recognized with the court's acceptance of these pleas. The FBI is grateful for everyone's untiring commitment in bringing a final resolution to this matter."

The United States Attorneys' Offices for the Northern Districts of Alabama and Georgia are in the process of contacting the victims of the three Atlanta bombings and the Birmingham bombing to inform them of the upcoming plea hearings. Phone lines have been established for victims to receive updated information: for the victims of the three Atlanta bombings, the toll-free number is (866) 290-2782; victims of the Birmingham bombing may contact (205) 244-2015.

Special Agents of the FBI and ATF investigated these cases and conducted the render-safe operations. Several other law enforcement agencies participated in the operations in Western North Carolina, including: the U.S. Forest Service and the National Park Service; the North Carolina Highway Patrol; the Sheriff's Office in Cherokee County; North Carolina State Bureau of Investigations; and the North Carolina Wildlife Resources.

The Birmingham case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Michael W. Whisonant and William R. Chambers of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Alabama and Assistant U.S. Attorney R. Joseph Burby IV of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia. The Atlanta case was prosecuted by U.S. Attorney David E. Nahmias, First Assistant U.S. Attorney Sally Quillan Yates, and Assistant U.S. Attorneys Phyllis B. Sumner, R. Joseph Burby IV and John Horn of the Northern District of Georgia.

Several offices of the FBI and ATF participated in the investigation and search and render-safe operations, including: the FBI offices in Birmingham, Alabama; Atlanta; and Charlotte, North Carolina, and the ATF offices in Atlanta; Charlotte; and Nashville, Tennessee.

The Department of Justice, FBI and ATF will have no further comment on these matters until after the plea hearings in Birmingham and Atlanta are completed, at which point the respective United States Attorneys will have press conferences in Birmingham and Atlanta. Further details on the timing and location of the press conferences will follow, along with details of a possible ATF and FBI briefing for the news media at the scene of the render-safe operations in Western North Carolina.

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