

Bombing attempt at Martin Luther King march in Spokane

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Hundreds of people participating in a Spokane, Washington Martin Luther King Jr. Day parade last Monday marched unaware that a bomb had been planted adjacent to the planned route.

A backpack containing the bomb was spotted by three city employees roughly an hour prior to the beginning of the march. The workers contacted police when they saw that there were wires inside the backpack. The police called in bomb-sniffing dogs, a robot and then bomb experts to defuse the device. In the meantime, the march had been re-routed away from the area.

FBI spokesman Frederick Gutt said, “The device appeared operational. It appeared to be deadly and it was intended to inflict multiple casualties.”

The placement of the bomb, described as “sophisticated,” on a metal bench in front of a brick wall was intended to project the force of the blast toward the marchers in order to maximize casualties. While the FBI has refused to release details about the bomb, an Associated Press article on Wednesday quoted an anonymous official as saying, “They haven’t seen anything like this in this country. This was the worst device, and most intentional device I’ve ever seen.”

A remote trigger, either a garage door opener or a cell phone, would likely have been used to detonate the bomb.

While agents have conducted interviews, no one has been identified as a suspect. Late Wednesday, the FBI announced that it would broaden its investigation to include neo-Nazi groups that have recently organized racist protests in nearby Coeur d’ Alene, Idaho.

White supremacists have congregated in that region since the mid-1970s, when Richard Butler founded the Aryan Nations compound in Hayden Lakes, Idaho. As a result of a lawsuit by the Southern Poverty Law Center,

that property was turned over in 2001 to two people beaten by drunken Aryan Nations guards.

According to the Spokesman-Review, Tony Stewart, a member of the Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations “said his organization tracked more than 100 felonies committed by hate groups in the area in the 1980s and ‘90s, including eight murders, several bank robberies and other crimes intended to intimidate residents.”

In 1996, several bombings in Spokane linked to white supremacists damaged a Planned Parenthood building, the City Hall and an office of the Spokesman-Review. An explosive device found next to the Thomas S. Foley US Courthouse last March 23 is still under investigation by the FBI.

Coming ten days after the shooting rampage in Tucson that killed six people and severely wounded Democratic Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords, what is most remarkable is the neglect of another domestic terror event by the media and politicians. The media for the most part has buried the story. The New York Times relegated the attempted bombing to a news report on its inside pages.

Despite the significance of what the FBI classifies as an act of domestic terror, there has been no official statement by politicians of either party—not even a pro-forma condemnation—on the attempted bombing.



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