

Fed workers rap security

Union wants Justice Dept. to guard buildings

SUN WIRE REPORTS

WASHINGTON — Citing the Oklahoma City bombing, a government workers union says the General Services Administration should be stripped of its job of guarding federal buildings.

In a harsh, eight-page report Monday, the American Federation of Government Employees said the GSA's primary role is dealing with government real estate and it should be confined to property management.

"In response to the Oklahoma City bombing ... we recommend that the job of

security at government offices be turned over to the Justice Department," the report said.

Union President John Sturdivant noted that the number of federal protective officers has dropped from 2,200 in 1985 to fewer than 400 in 1995. The officers are security personnel hired and trained by the federal government.

The GSA is conducting a comprehensive security study of 1,400 facilities where 75 percent of the nation's 1 million federal workers are employed.

Immediately after the April 19 blast

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at the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, U.S. offices went into a "heightened state of security," beefing up everything from metal detectors and security guards to installing cameras and closing off streets.

Officials say it will cost \$29 million to continue that level of security through the summer.

Henry Connors, a spokesman for the GSA, said the agency would wait for a June 20 review of security before commenting on findings from the union.

He said the GSA had met with the union

and knew it had concerns to submit.

"We didn't know they would submit them in this fashion," he said.

Jane Graham, president of the union's Oklahoma City local and survivor of the terrorist attack, said union studies have found a high rate of anxiety among federal workers nationwide. She said many now fear the "strangers" they serve.

Jaroy McGuirt, an asset manager with the Department of Housing and Urban Development, said employees in his Oklahoma City office had talked about being attacked by disgruntled clients

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or anti-government citizens, but never imagined anything like what happened.

"I realized at the time that security was totally inadequate," he said. "We had one security man going from one building to the other."

✓ He called for a better security system using more guards with tighter controls on parking lots and parking spaces around federal buildings and frequent "perimeter patrols" to check suspicious vehicles.

Sturdivant said the guards the government uses from private contractors are not screened thoroughly enough.

He pointed out that Timothy McVeigh, charged in the bombing, was at one time a private security guard at a government contractor.

In other developments Monday:

■ Prosecutors asked a magistrate for more time to prepare an indictment against suspect Terry Nichols.

Under the Speedy Trial Act, a suspect must be indicted within 30 days of his arrest. Nichols was charged May 9.