



Bomb Plot Thwarted at Falwell's Funeral

Student Arrested With Homemade Bombs, Three Other Suspects Sought

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Even in death, the Rev. Jerry Falwell rouses the most volatile of emotions.

A small group of protesters gathered near the funeral services to criticize the man who mobilized Christian evangelicals and made them a major force in American politics -- often by playing on social prejudices.

A group of students from Falwell's Liberty University staged a counterprotest.

And Campbell County authorities arrested a Liberty University student for having several homemade bombs in his car.

The student, 19-year-old Mark D. Uhl of Amissville, Va., reportedly told authorities that he was making the bombs to stop protesters from disrupting the funeral service. The devices were made of a combination of gasoline and detergent, a law enforcement official told ABC News' Pierre Thomas. They were "slow burn," according to the official, and would not have been very destructive.

"There were indications that there were others involved in the manufacturing of these devices and we are still investigating these individuals with the assistance of ATF [Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms], Virginia State Police and FBI. At this time it is not believed that these devices were going to be used to interrupt the funeral services at Liberty University," the Campbell County Sheriff's Office said in a release.

Three other suspects are being sought, one of whom is a soldier from Fort Benning, Ga., and another is a high school student. No information was available on the third suspect.

Authorities were alerted to the potential bomb plot after relative of Uhl called to say that he had homemade bombs in his possession. Officials searched Uhl's car where they found five incendiary devices in the trunk.

Uhl is currently being held under no bond at the Campbell County Adult Detention Center.

Thousands Came to Honor Man Who Mobilized Christian Evangelicals

Falwell, often called the father of the Christian conservative movement, died suddenly last week at age 73.

Thousands flocked to the Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Va., which Falwell founded 50 years ago, for the funeral service.

The church had just 35 parishioners when Falwell began preaching there in 1956. At Tuesday's service, its 6,000 seats were filled by people who'd come to say goodbye.

"Almost every single person gathered here today is really here because on a real and personal level you and Dr. Jerry Falwell were friends," said Ronald S. Godwin, executive vice president of Liberty University.

To the end, though, Falwell inspired strong feelings. He launched an evangelical movement that changed the face of American religion and politics and catapulted him to national prominence from his "Old Time Gospel Hour" television show.

Falwell's Moral Majority, a group he founded in the 1970s, broke new ground in mobilizing evangelical Christians in the political arena, helping Ronald Reagan win the White House in 1980.

As time went on, however, Falwell's influence waned, partly due to his own penchant for controversy.

But his comments in the days after the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks made it nearly impossible for mainstream politicians to associate with him.

No national Republicans attended Tuesday's funeral, including none of the GOP presidential candidates. All said they were too busy.

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