

# Progress, Lingering Problems in FBI Lab

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The FBI laboratory's troubled explosives unit still is not staffed entirely with scientists, but the bureau has made significant progress in resolving lab problems, the Justice Department's inspector general reported yesterday.

A year ago, Inspector General Michael Bromwich blasted the lab for flawed scientific work and inaccurate testimony in major cases, including the Oklahoma City and World Trade Center bombings. He recommended major reforms and discipline for five agents.

The new review criticized the training of lab examiners for court testimony and found continuing confusion over who is monitoring the explosives unit for contamination.

But Bromwich said the new lab director, Donald M. Kerr Jr., a physicist-engineer who previously

headed the government's Los Alamos nuclear weapons lab, has promised to rectify remaining problems.

Overall, "the FBI is making a sustained and serious effort to address the substantial problems we identified in our original report," Bromwich wrote.

Bromwich revealed that, years after FBI Director Louis Freeh embraced the idea, the on-site evaluation of the lab for its first accreditation by outside experts finally began last week. o cited progress in case documentation, examiner training, scientific protocols, and evidence handling.

But follow-up report was blasted by Stephen Kohn, lawyer for former FBI chemist-agent Frederic Whitehurst, whose allegations triggered the lab investigation. Kohn said, "The inspector general is responding to the official FBI line from unit chiefs and the lab director and finding some problems."

Bromwich's new report painted a



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**Inspector General Michael Bromwich noted improvements in the FBI's lab, but problems remain.**

critical picture of new Materials and Devices Unit chief Tom Jordan, a lab veteran and forensic chemist who oversees the explosives unit, now renamed the Explosives Operations Group.

A plan to staff the unit with "qualified scientists" rather than agents who are bomb technicians has not been fully implemented.