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Thomas Jefferson slandered as “terrorist” at Oklahoma bombing trial, say Libertarians

WASHINGTON, DC — In your pocket, you probably have the likeness of a virulently anti-government terrorist that Timothy McVeigh admired.

His name: Thomas Jefferson — the revered Founding Father and third President of the USA — whose image is on every American five-cent coin.

Thomas Jefferson: A terrorist? That’s what government prosecutors at the Oklahoma City bombing trial are suggesting — and it has Libertarians hopping mad.

“It’s outrageous that Thomas Jefferson, one of America’s greatest champions of human liberty, should be caricaturized and slandered as a terrorist,” said Libertarian Party national chairman Steve Dasbach.

During the first few days of the trial, witnesses for the prosecution testified about “virulent, violent” anti-government literature found in McVeigh’s car when he was arrested — including a T-shirt with Jefferson’s famous quote: “The tree of Liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants.”

Prosecutor Joseph Hartzler said the Jefferson quote “broadcast [McVeigh’s] intentions” to blow up the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building two years ago.

“What these lawyers don’t seem to realize is that being anti-government and being a terrorist are not synonymous,” said Dasbach. “In fact, distrust of government has a long and noble history in America. Thomas Jefferson *was* anti-government — but he had reason to be; he spent most of his life suffering under the oppressive yoke of British tyranny. And a majority of Americans today are anti-government. They, too, have reason to be; they see 40% of their income seized for taxes and they see Congress chipping away at the Bill of Rights.

“But loving liberty and fearing your government doesn’t make you a terrorist. It makes you the kind of good citizen that Jefferson believed to be *essential*; the kind who works through the political system to keep the excesses of government in check,” he said.

However, warned Dasbach, please don’t confuse the Libertarians’ defense of Jefferson’s writings with support for any violent acts that kill innocent people.

“Libertarians wholeheartedly condemn the use of force to achieve political or social goals,” said Dasbach. “If McVeigh is found guilty of murdering 168 people, he should pay for his crime — whether he acted out of ordinary criminal motives or misdirected political motives. Murder is murder. But it shouldn’t be necessary to drag Thomas Jefferson’s name through the mud to decide if McVeigh is guilty of murder.”

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