

Reports on Waco tragedy stop short of telling whole rotten truth

by Harley Schlanger

The release of reports by the Treasury Department and the Department of Justice (DOJ) on the actions of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) and the FBI in the Branch Davidian tragedy near Waco, Texas on April 19 provides some answers, but still evades the most important question: Why did the assault and siege, which left almost 100 dead, occur at all?

It comes as no surprise that the Treasury report blasted the ATF's decision to proceed with the raid, even though it was clear, despite repeated denials by top ATF officials after the raid, in which four ATF agents were killed, that the element of surprise had been lost. Nor was it a surprise that ATF Director Stephen Higgins was ousted and five ATF officials who planned the raid and then misled the public were suspended.

The Treasury report, prepared under the direction of the Assistant Secretary for Enforcement Ron Noble, offers the following rationale for the botched raid: "In the end, this is less a story of wrong choices made than one of choices not made at all as the momentum of the massive operation—left unchecked by the raid commanders and ATF management—carried it inexorably forward, with speed substituted for reflection and inquiry. . . . Decisions that now appear flawed may well not have been decisions at all but simply steps taken along what seemed at the time to be a preordained road."

In bureaucratized, this means that Treasury officials now admit that the decision to proceed with the raid was an error. However, the report does not indicate that investigators ever questioned why a raid was necessary, or even if there was ample, legitimate cause for targeting Koresh and his followers in the first place.

As *EIR* has reported previously, ATF was influenced in its decision to target Koresh by the Cult Awareness Network (CAN), a private organization of kidnapers and brainwashers.

This charge by *EIR* was confirmed in the recommendation prepared by Nancy Ammerman for the Justice and Treasury departments, which was released on Sept. 3. Both agencies appear to have ignored her findings.

DOJ attempts coverup

The initial press coverage of the DOJ report, which was released on Oct. 8, was that it exonerated the FBI of all blame

for the 51-day standoff and the final assault, in which 85 people, including 17 children, were killed. This slant came from the summary provided by Edward Dennis, Jr., a former deputy attorney general who coordinated the DOJ review. Dennis wrote, "I find that there is no place in the evaluation for blame, and I find no fault in the performance of law enforcement during the standoff and tear gas assault."

That Dennis reached this conclusion is not shocking. He admits in the introduction to the report that he did not even attempt an independent inquiry: "I have primarily relied upon the record gathered by the department as the basis for the conclusions in this report."

His reliance on FBI-DOJ reports led him to reach the same conclusion that the FBI-DOJ had reached; that "the events of April 19 [the day of the final assault with CS gas and possibly fire-spewing tanks] were the result of David Koresh's determined efforts to choreograph his own death and the deaths of his followers in a confrontation with federal authorities to fulfill Koresh's apocalyptic prophesy. The deaths of Koresh, his followers and their children on April 19 were not the result of a flaw in the gas plan or the negotiation strategy."

But even within the body of Dennis's report, backed by the findings of Ammerman, there is evidence of flaws in the plans, flaws which resulted in an avoidable carnage.

Religious intolerance

There is, for example, the issue of religion. Ammerman, an associate professor at the Candler School of Theology at Emory University, points out that the FBI did not consult experts on what she calls "high-commitment religious" groups, or "marginal religious movements." An internal FBI memo on Koresh acknowledged that it "has been speculated that Koresh's religious beliefs are nothing more than a con, in order to get power, money, women, etc." Thus, Koresh's request for time to write a treatise on the "Seven Seals" was viewed by the FBI as a stalling tactic. In fact, agents denied that he was even writing such a document.

However, a computer disk which was saved by one of the survivors proves that not only was he writing it, but that it is a reasoned, organized, serious interpretation of the Bible, according to Phillip Arnold, a religious scholar at the Reunion Institute in Houston.

In her report, Ammerman identified a “tendency to discount the influence of religious beliefs” by the FBI. By doing so in the case of Koresh, she said, the FBI failed to exhibit an understanding of “the pervasiveness of religious experimentation in American history and the fundamental right of groups like the Davidians to practice their religion.” She added that such “new or dissident religious groups are often ‘millennialist’ or ‘apocalyptic’ ” and, as such, “are usually more threatening to cherished notions about how we all ought to order our lives than to our physical well-being.”

Ammerman’s insightful analysis bears witness to the fact that FBI officials have more than once shown contempt for religious belief. Kenneth Lanning, the Bureau’s purported expert on satanic child abuse, once said that more children have been abused in the name of Christianity than Satanism. It also vindicates the warnings of protesters who arrived in Waco with signs which asked ominously, “Is Your Church ATF-FBI Approved?”

Psychiatric murderers

The most egregious failure was that of the so-called psychological experts consulted by the FBI. Though the report confirms that the conclusions reached by the experts about Koresh’s intentions were “contradictory,” (i.e., could he be trusted to come out? was he suicidal?), it concludes that it was nevertheless correct to launch the final assault. In his report, Dennis says that, before the decision was made to send tanks to puncture the walls and pour in CS gas, “all reasonable alternatives were considered and the decision to insert CS gas was a reasonable one. I conclude that an indefinite siege was not a realistic option.”

How did the FBI reach this conclusion?

The FBI consulted three “experts” who are on retainer with the Bureau. They concluded that Koresh is a “delusional person willing to die and see his followers die according to his teachings,” and that further negotiations would be fruitless. Two of the three, psycho-linguist Murray Miron and psychiatrist Joseph Krofcheck, arrived at this conclusion on April 10 after reading just two letters written by Koresh. From this, Miron said that there is “no hope for an early end to the standoff,” while Krofcheck said that Koresh will not come out voluntarily and “the government is the hostage. . . . We have no clear ability to influence the exit of him and his followers from their compound short of tactical intervention.”

The third expert, Dr. Park Elliot Dietz, had reached the same conclusion on March 2. At the time, he said he thought it “unlikely” that Koresh would leave voluntarily. In an April 17 memo, he reiterated this belief. According to the DOJ report, “Dietz opined that negotiating in good faith would not resolve the situation as it now stands.”

The conclusions of these three were included in the briefing that influenced Attorney General Janet Reno’s final decision to launch the deadly assault on April 19.

The briefing given to Reno was the source of another controversy. In her press conference on April 19, she stated that she had ordered the assault after receiving reports that children in the compound were being abused, and she stuck with that explanation. Yet, the DOJ report contradicts Reno, stating, “There was no evidence indicating Koresh engaged in any physical or sexual abuse of children during the standoff.”

When asked to comment, Reno said on Oct. 8, “It was my understanding from what was told to me that child abuse was ongoing. I now understand that nobody in the Bureau told me it was ongoing. We were briefed and I misunderstood.” This costly “misunderstanding” resulted in the deaths of the 17 children on whose behalf she believed she was acting. There is no indication that anyone, not Reno, or her briefers, or those who carried out the assault, will be held legally responsible for the deaths.

CAN brainwashers exposed

The two reports provide ample evidence that federal law enforcement agencies are out of control, although that conclusion somehow escaped those who prepared them. The Waco tragedy followed the pattern set by DOJ injustices in the LaRouche railroad and the assault against Randy Weaver, among many such atrocities.

In each of these cases, the agencies involved have been tainted by their collaboration with the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) and CAN. These organizations, which work closely together, target groups or individuals which fit their profile of “authoritarian,” i.e., either religious or patriotic organizations which oppose the destruction of the United States and its transformation into a secular strike force on behalf of a globalist new world order.

The ADL and CAN not only select the targets, but then shape the environment, both through repeated attacks and slanders against their victims, which are sucked up by their accomplices in the media, and by whipping up law enforcement officials with their fraudulent characterizations of such groups as “dangerous cults.”

Ammerman’s report criticizes Rick Ross, a CAN “deprogrammer” currently awaiting trial for kidnapping in Washington State, whose “deprogramming” of a former member provided the basis for the ATF’s warrant against Koresh. (The DOJ report confirms this, and admits that Ross contacted them; it says defensively, “The FBI did not ‘rely’ on Ross for advice whatsoever during the standoff.”)

On Ross’s relationship with ATF, she writes, “It is unclear how information gained from him was evaluated. The Network and Mr. Ross have a direct ideological (and financial) interest in arousing antagonism against what they call ‘cults.’ These same persons seem to have been major sources for the series of stories run by the Waco newspaper, beginning Feb. 27. It seems clear that people within the ‘anti-cult’ community had targeted the Branch Davidians.”