

Waco verdict: another heavy blow to 'Big Brother'

by Jeffrey Steinberg

On Feb. 26, after just three days of deliberation, a San Antonio, Texas federal jury found all 11 surviving members of the Branch Davidian religious sect not guilty of murder in the deaths of four U.S. Treasury Department agents who were killed in a shoot-out at the group's Waco compound almost exactly one year ago. Although seven of the defendants were convicted of lesser charges, the exoneration message from the jury was unambiguous.

It was perhaps most clearly stated by Dan Cogdell, attorney for Branch Davidian Clive Doyle, one of the four members acquitted of all charges: "This sends a loud and clear message to law enforcement that you don't negotiate with tanks, that you don't assault a house when there's people inside that don't need to be assaulted, and you don't bring a case you can't prove."

On Feb. 28, 1993, seventy Treasury agents from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (BATF) assaulted the Branch Davidian compound ten miles outside of Waco, ostensibly to serve search warrants and an arrest warrant on David Koresh, the sect's leader. Although the details of what happened on Feb. 28 are widely contested to this day, audio-taped conversations between Branch Davidians inside the compound and the local sheriff's department's 911 emergency line strongly suggest that the BATF agents came in firing their weapons. Members of the sect returned fire, and before the shooting stopped, four federal agents and six Branch Davidians were dead and many others wounded.

The local sheriff and district attorney strongly criticized the BATF's handling of the incident, pointing out that on several occasions, Koresh had cooperated with local law enforcement in similar legal situations. Koresh, the primary target of the BATF raid, often jogged outside the church compound, and could have been easily served with the war-

rant on any one of a number of occasions. As one local resident told the *New York Times*: "They handle drunks better than they handled these church people."

When the smoke cleared on Feb. 28 and the bodies of the dead were removed, a standoff commenced between federal agents surrounding the compound and the 80 or so Branch Davidians holed up inside. On April 19, the FBI, now in charge of the "negotiations," again stormed the compound, this time using tanks and firing a powerful tear gas that is banned from wartime use under international codes of conduct. The compound went up in flames, killing everyone inside, including David Koresh.

FBI listened to kooks' advice

Newly appointed U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno had approved the FBI raid on the basis of reports from senior FBI officials that there was widespread child abuse going on inside. Subsequent medical investigations of some of the children who were able to leave the compound before the fire-massacre showed that no such abuse had occurred.

The FBI dossier on the Branch Davidians was produced by the Bureau's Behavioral Science unit housed at Quantico, Virginia. The unit is dominated by psychiatrists who cut their teeth on government secret programs experimenting in mind control, such as the CIA's MK-Ultra experiments on unwitting victims with the powerful psychedelic drug LSD. Kenneth Lanning, the FBI Special Agent in charge of the Behavioral Sciences unit, has been publicly linked to neo-pagan and occult groups. Lanning has systematically suppressed evidence of the existence of violent satanic cults, such as the "Son of Sam" cult which carried out a string of ritualistic murders in New York City in the mid-1970s, while at the same time pressing for federal actions against new religious



The scene in Waco, Texas during the February 1993 standoff between Branch Davidian religious sect members and law enforcement officials. Inset: Attorney General Janet Reno. The jury's finding that surviving members of the sect were not guilty of murder "sends a loud and clear message to law enforcement that you don't negotiate with tanks," said one defense attorney. Will Reno and FBI Director Freeh draw the right conclusions?

groups, including the Branch Davidians.

The FBI behaviorists must have been well aware of the new attorney general's deep personal concern over child abuse, and played upon that concern in order to win her approval for the April 19 armed assault.

In the wake of the Waco tragedy, scores of investigators, many already active in the fight against the out-of-control use of violence by federal agents, turned up compelling evidence that the government's claims that Koresh had ordered his followers to set fire to the compound in a replay of the Nov. 18, 1978 Jonestown, Guyana "mass suicide" was not only phony, but was aimed at covering up the FBI's mass murder of the Branch Davidians.

While the jurors in San Antonio made no public statements after their decision suggesting that they believed that the FBI had willfully murdered the sect members, the acquittal on the murder charges nevertheless delivered a devastating blow to the federal government's credibility on these matters.

Even Attorney General Reno, who already publicly admitted that she had been mis-briefed on the situation in Waco before she authorized the April 19 assault that resulted in over 80 deaths, told reporters a few hours after the verdict: "I will never forget Waco, and the ghost of Waco will be with me all of my life. One of the tragedies of Waco is that we will never know what the right judgment was."

The message from the San Antonio jury extends beyond the BATF and FBI. It applies equally to agents of the U.S.

Marshal Service, who carried out a similar overkill armed assault against Randy Weaver and his family in rural Idaho several years ago, killing his teenage son and Mrs. Weaver, and hurting her infant daughter whom she was holding in her arms. Last summer, a jury found Weaver and a second man not guilty of charges that they murdered a federal agent during a lengthy siege at the Weavers' secluded mountain cabin. A grand jury is now considering murder indictments against several FBI officials who were involved in the shoot-out.

The same message applies even more pointedly to two private agencies which were just as guilty of the unwarranted government assaults as if they had pulled the fatal triggers themselves. The Cult Awareness Network (CAN) and the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith (ADL) played pivotal roles in inciting both the Weaver and Waco tragedies by feeding the pathetically uninformed federal agencies with incendiary and, in some cases, wittingly false information about the individuals under government scrutiny.

CAN's "expert" on the Branch Davidians, convicted jewel thief Rick Ross, was recently prosecuted on state kidnapping charges in Washington state. Although he was acquitted in a jury trial, other CAN kidnapers have not fared as well recently. Galen Kelly, a longtime CAN "deprogrammer" who has, by his own admission, participated in hundreds of kidnappings, is now serving a lengthy federal jail term after having been caught kidnapping a woman in Washington, D.C. Kelly was earlier prosecuted for a conspiracy to kidnap Lewis du Pont Smith, an heir to the DuPont chemical fortune

and a strong supporter of Democratic Party presidential candidate Lyndon LaRouche.

The ADL works closely with the CAN, and played a crucial supporting role in the Waco tragedy through its Australian affiliate. Phony reports on Branch Davidians living in Australia were funneled through the U.S. Embassy there into the BATF, setting into motion the initial targeting of the group.

Coverup jeopardized

The Feb. 27 jury verdict puts new pressure on Attorney General Reno and new FBI Director Louis Frieh to conduct a long-overdue cleanout of the Bureau and the Justice Department's in-house paramilitary units, whom the American public is increasingly coming to view as little more than death squads.

Following the initial Feb. 28, 1993 shoot-out at Waco, Treasury Secretary Lloyd Bentsen ordered an in-house probe of the shoot-out. The report passed back to Bentsen was a scathing indictment of the BATF hierarchy. Senior agents at the scene knew in advance that plans for their armed assault on the Branch Davidian compound had been leaked to members of the sect, but the decision was nevertheless made to proceed with the assault. BATF Director Steven Higgins was fired by Bentsen, and five top aides were suspended as the result of the inquiry.

But over at the Justice Department, no such self-criticism has been forthcoming. Deeply entrenched networks, in some cases held over from the "Gay" Edgar Hoover era, are in a struggle with the new director to block any cleanup. An in-house FBI review of the April 19 Waco raid absolved the Bureau's SWAT unit of any wrongdoing or even poor judgment. However, a parallel report on the April events, commissioned by the White House, strongly contradicted the FBI report and said that the bloodbath could have been avoided had federal agents taken a range of other options.

The Waco verdict will not be the last word on government death squad operations. There are scores of similar cases across the country which never gained the notoriety of the Weaver or Waco tragedies, but which are still being pursued.

Not the least of these cases was the Oct. 6-7, 1986 paramilitary raid on the publishing offices of associates of Lyndon LaRouche. Some 400 federal, state, and county police, backed up by U.S. military counter-terror units, fixed-wing aircraft, helicopters, and armored personnel carriers, conducted a 24-hour siege, which was cut short when Lyndon LaRouche sent a personal telegram to President Ronald Reagan alerting him to the action. The ADL and CAN played a central role in that armed assault as well; six volumes of evidence of massive government corruption in the case are already on file with the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals in Richmond, Virginia.

Time is running out on the federal government's deeply entrenched, but now highly vulnerable police state apparatus.

The strange spy case of Aldrich Ames

by Edward Spannaus and Jeffrey Steinberg

Veteran CIA agent Aldrich Hazen Ames and his wife Maria del Rosario Casas Ames were arrested by FBI agents on Feb. 22, in what is emerging as a bizarre tale of alleged espionage and double-agentry involving Russia and the former Soviet Union. According to a 35-page FBI affidavit, Ames began to function as an agent of the Soviet KGB from about May 1985 on, and he continued to provide classified information to the Russian Federation's Foreign Intelligence Service (FIS, or SVRR). The affidavit asserts that Ames had been paid more than \$1.5 million by the KGB and SVRR; this amount has now risen to over \$2.5 million.

How Aldrich and his wife managed to spend large amounts of unaccounted-for cash, and still evade detection over a period of years, is only one of the many unexplained mysteries of this case.

If the allegations against him are true, Ames is the highest-level U.S. intelligence official ever caught spying for the Soviets. Intelligence officials have been telling Congress and the press that as many as 10 agents recruited by U.S. agencies were betrayed and killed as a result of Ames's espionage; others dispute that figure, and point to the likely presence of still other "moles." Some observers have pointed out that the uncovering of Ames provides a convenient explanation for U.S. intelligence failures during the middle-to-late 1980s, failures which in reality have much deeper and more diverse causes.

A spy's career

Ironically, Ames is the son of career CIA officer Carlton Cecil Ames, who is reported to have worked under James Jesus Angleton, the former chief of CIA counterintelligence who was notorious for his obsessive hunts for Soviet moles in the agency. The young Aldrich Ames joined the CIA in 1962 at the age of 21. The CIA sent him to college; two years after his graduation, Ames was sent into his first field post, in Ankara, Turkey, in 1969. In 1972, he was transferred back to CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia, and beginning in 1976, he spent five years in New York City attempting to recruit Russians to "turn" and work for U.S. intelligence.

In 1981, Ames was sent to Mexico City, where he met his present wife, who was then serving as the Colombian cultural attaché. According to accounts, Ames recruited her to also work for the CIA. At the end of 1983, Ames was