

Waco hearings become a partisan standoff

by Leo F. Scanlon

With eight days of testimony completed, the House of Representatives hearings into the February 28, 1993 tragedy in Waco, Texas have bogged down in a political standoff which appears as intractable as the original confrontation between the Branch Davidian religious group and the Justice and Treasury agents who besieged their compound. Just as *EIR* predicted, the hearings have been fatally flawed by the fact that the Republican leadership (which organized the proceeding) has stuck to its stated goal of pinning the massacre on the Clinton administration. As a result, the inquiry has been diverted from investigating any lead which would shed light on the machinations of Bush administration officials, DOJ bureaucrats, and a corrupt network of "consultants" who shaped the confrontation and its antecedents.

Democrats Charles Schumer (N.Y.) and John Conyers (Mich.) have deftly exploited this weakness with *ad hominem* attacks on witnesses and Republican committee members alike, whom they portray as "anti-law enforcement" fanatics. Schumer slyly accused the Republicans of engaging in the practice of using isolated facts or incidents to concoct negative portrayals of law enforcement officials—a practice which, he noted, is the stock-in-trade of "my side of the aisle." John Conyers pressed the attack by confessing himself to be a past-master of that very art, and proceeded to generate sound-bites and headlines by conducting an all-out defense of each and every action of the FBI and ATF agents questioned by the committee. The administration will have little choice but to hew to this line—at least in public—as it defends itself before the committee.

It didn't begin in Waco

The endemic corruption within the top ranks of the "permanent bureaucracy" of the federal law-enforcement agencies involved in the incident casts a long shadow over the hearing. Yet, the Congressional probers have so far failed to dig into that matter. Instead, GOP majority leaders have tried to steer the hearings into another front in their election-cycle Whitewater scandal mongering. Their hope is that Clinton administration officials, FBI chief Webster Hubbell, Attorney General Janet Reno, and perhaps some unnamed White House officials, can be held culpable for the decision to authorize the final assault, and might be implicated in

the alleged destruction of evidence which occurred during the official investigation of the incident.

The problem with the theory is that it is nonsense, concocted by the networks associated with Gun Owners of America head Larry Pratt, British oligarchical mouthpiece Ambrose Evans-Pritchard, and the claqué of "conservative revolutionaries" who are trying to prop up their increasingly unpopular congressional agenda dazzling the public with scandals and rumors of scandals.

Evans-Pritchard has complained bitterly that the first round of this scheme blew up in the faces of the Republican committee. Writing in the July 23 London *Sunday Telegraph*, he proclaimed that "The Waco and Whitewater hearings in Congress have failed to inflict any serious damage on the Clinton presidency. Quite the opposite. The Republicans are the ones in trouble, struggling to counter criticism that they are engaged in a cheap attack on the White House. If they carry on the same way next week they will have a major fiasco on their hands. . . . Good riddance to Whitewater, But the collapse of the Waco hearings in the House of Representatives is another matter."

Evans-Pritchard went on to denounce the committee for allowing Kiri Jewell, a child whose parents were part of the Branch Davidian sect, to testify to the committee that she had been the victim of sexual abuse by David Koresh. Evans-Pritchard fumed that her allegations, sensational though they may be, have been disputed by her grandmother and mother (who she says facilitated the crime), and are being used in a mercenary fashion by the father who abandoned her as an infant, and is now making the lucrative rounds of the tabloid talk show circuit.

"But how could the Republicans fail to anticipate that this would happen?" he asked. "Why did they let her testify in front of the TV cameras knowing that it would be impossible to conduct a cross-examination of the poor girl in such an atmosphere? And why didn't they do their homework on the Jewell story?"

CANned allegations

How clever of Mr. Pritchard to ask questions which he would never answer! The fact that the allegations blew up in the face of the Republicans, begs the question of where they came from in the first place. Jewell's allegations, and similar sensational stories of child abuse and other horrors, were retailed throughout the ATF and the Department of Justice (DOJ), and according to Attorney General Reno, were essential in convincing her to authorize the FBI to end the standoff with Koresh by assaulting the compound. The allegations were developed by the Cult Awareness Network (CAN), and were circulated by DOJ officials who were under the direction of Mark Richard and the recently demoted Larry Potts—career bureaucrats who have represented the continuity of control and oversight of the operation which began under the direction of Bush administration

appointees, and which came to its conclusion under the Clinton administration transition team.

The relationship between these corrupt informants and the architects of the indictment and raid of the Koresh compound, is paradigmatic of the environment which shaped federal law enforcement during the Bush administration. The keystone of the era was the Executive Order 12333, drafted in 1981, with which the Bush team authorized all manner of collaboration with criminal syndicates in order to further the political agenda of his faction of the banking and intelligence community. Under this umbrella, the "Thornburgh Doctrine" announced an aggressive assault on all the mechanisms which would check and inhibit unconstitutional or illegal actions by politically motivated prosecutors—at home and abroad. The message, communicated down the line to the agents in the field, was underscored by an incessant attack on the Bill of Rights which emanated from the Justice Department (and is continued by the very Republicans who profess outrage at the actions of the ATF and FBI in Waco).

The result of the Bush-era policies was a creeping, systemic corruption of law enforcement practices. Increasingly, the use of "secret informants" was substituted for honest investigations and old-fashioned police work. Legions of embittered federal and local investigators have reported that as a result, too many law enforcement investigations are literally "driven by the informants." In this environment, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith and its stable of McCarthyite, guttersnipe informants became a political power within the highest ranks of the Federal law enforcement apparatus.

The ATF investigations of the Koresh sect were polluted by this apparatus from the start, and Evans-Pritchard, as well as everyone else involved, knows this very well. The *Washington Post* ran an article calling attention to this on July 2, as the hearings were being prepared. One of the first witnesses before the committee pleaded for an investigation of the role of CAN and the informants and "cult experts" who advised the ATF. The committee has steadfastly refused this line of inquiry.

Another point which has blown up in the face of the Republicans, is the effort to blame the final decisions which led to the incineration of dozens of innocent people on Clinton administration officials who allegedly authorized the FBI assault. As testimony from FBI officials Jeffrey Jamar and Byron Sage has made clear, the Clinton administration was misled on two crucial points which formed the basis of that decision, and the persons responsible for that misbriefing of Webster Hubbell, Janet Reno, and the White House, were Larry Potts and Mark Richard.

These officials reported to the administration that the FBI had run out of patience, was on the verge of a morale crisis over the standoff, and had concluded that all negotiations with Koresh were at a dead end. They threw in gratu-

itous (CAN-generated) allegations that Koresh was beating and abusing children, and that the abuse would be fatal if there were not an immediate intervention. On the basis of these assertions, the administration gave the go-ahead to the plans worked out by Jamar and others who wholeheartedly and uncritically accepted the authority of the "experts" who were evaluating events for the FBI.

In fact, Richard DeGuerin, the attorney for Koresh, was at that very moment conducting fruitful negotiations with his client, based on a collaboration with several religion scholars who understood Koresh's religious beliefs and were working with him on a plan which would allow him to surrender without coming into conflict with those beliefs. This fact, according to Jamar and others, was not communicated to the administration.

What was communicated, was the evaluation of a group of behavioral scientists, some based in at the FBI training base in Quantico, Virginia, and others who operate as consultants to the FBI, who had insisted from the beginning that Koresh was nothing other than a garden-variety anti-social personality and con man, who should be handled with aggressive psychological warfare techniques. This outlook clearly shaped the actions of Jamar and Sage, who planned and conducted the final assault. Even FBI negotiators on the scene were uncomfortable with this evaluation: One of them told the committee that it reminded him of "the Noriega situation," in which such techniques were used on a grand scale. The "Noriega" reference was to the first and most violent "testing" of the Thornburgh Doctrine, which gave the U.S. super-sovereign rights to invade foreign countries to prosecute U.S. criminal cases.

The committee failed to question even one of these behavioral scientists, "psycholinguistics" experts, and other spooky characters, and hasn't even asked in public for a list of who these "experts" are. Park Elliott Deitz, a guru to this crowd, and a key link to the CAN apparatus, was scheduled to testify, but for some unexplained reason, never did.

Legacy of Abscam

The committee failed to note the irony of the fact that the expert witness called to sanctify the use of CS gas against infants and children (actually one of the minor barbarities in the story), was a British official who justified the use of the chemical (which is banned from international warfare) against Irish opponents of the British occupation.

This is but one of many footnotes to the deeper scandal which this hearing symptomizes. The U.S. Congress is shown to be a complete failure at investigating corruption and malfeasance within the federal law enforcement bureaucracy. The roots of this are more than a decade old, when the Congress went along with Abscam, the FBI sting operation that targeted a pre-selected group of Congressmen and Senators for bribery frameup.