

Waco cover-up unravels, but GOP won't investigate

by Edward Spannaus

Even as new evidence concerning the deadly FBI assault at Waco, Texas on April 19, 1993 was making headlines almost daily, Congressional Republicans were shamelessly admitting that they have no intention of getting to the bottom of the massacre and the ensuing cover-up run by the FBI and the permanent bureaucracy at the Department of Justice (DOJ).

A few days after his short-lived appointment to head an extraordinary special "task force" of the Senate Judiciary Committee to investigate the DOJ, Sen. Arlen Specter (R-Pa.) declared that he wants to focus the investigation on the spurious allegations of Chinese espionage. "There's nothing we can do about Waco except correct procedures for the future," Specter said. "Espionage, I think, is the number-one priority."

Specter's approach was supported by Sen. Charles Grassley (R-Iowa), another member of the GOP task force, and hitherto a vocal critic of the FBI. "Waco is history, regardless of what we find out," Grassley said.

A week later, House Majority Leader Dick Armey (R-Tex.) concurred, saying that he also doesn't see "any compelling need" for hearings on Waco in the House. Rep. Mark Souder (R-Ind.), a member of the House Government Reform Committee, declared: "There's Waco fatigue. . . . There's a feeling that the political risk may be higher than the political gain of pursuing this subject."

Then, on Oct. 14, after weeks of internal bickering within the Senate Judiciary Committee, a compromise was reached in which the special task force idea was dropped, and the investigation will instead be assigned to a subcommittee.

The task force proposal had run into two major obstacles: Democrats refused to participate, labelling it "partisan," and Attorney General Janet Reno refused to provide confidential DOJ documents to it, saying that it lacked proper authority.

Specter, who will head the subcommittee probe, is maintaining that he will not put any priority on investigating Waco, instead insisting that alleged Chinese espionage and the 1996 campaign finance investigation are much more important. The permanent bureaucracy in the DOJ and FBI have nothing to fear from Specter.

More Waco evidence surfaces

Meanwhile, two expert witnesses have now declared that they believe the FBI fired gunshots during the Bureau attack on the Branch Davidian buildings.

One is Carlos Ghigliotti, an expert in thermal imaging and videotape analysis, who in the past has done work for the FBI. "I conclude that the FBI fired shots on that day," Ghigliotti told the *Washington Post*. "I conclude this based on the ground-view videos taken from several different angles simultaneously and based on the overhead thermal tape. The gunfire from the ground is there, without a doubt."

A second expert, Edward F. Allard, who was formerly the deputy director of the Defense Department's night-vision laboratory, was interviewed by special counsel John Danforth on Oct. 5. Allard is an expert witness in the wrongful-death civil case growing out of the Waco massacre, and according to court papers filed in that case, a report prepared by him "leaves no doubt that the U.S. repeatedly fired gunshots into the [compound] and at its occupants."

In another development indicating a further unravelling of the cover-up, the FBI has located thousands of pages of previously undisclosed documents concerning the Waco siege and attack; the documents were located at the FBI facility at Quantico, Virginia, where its Hostage Rescue Team is based.

Among other things, the new documents show that, prior to the day of the assault, FBI agents had thrown or launched "flash-bang" grenades at Branch Davidian members who attempted to leave the compound, in order to drive them back into the buildings; obviously, gunfire directed at the Davidian buildings on the day of the assault would have had the same effect.

FBI had TV cameras

But what is possibly the most damaging new admission came as newly disclosed FBI documents show that the Bureau had the Davidian compound surrounded by closed-circuit TV (CCTV) cameras and special sensing devices. For years, the FBI has denied having any cameras at Waco except infrared cameras deployed on aircraft flying high above.

FBI interview forms obtained by the *Dallas Morning News* quote an FBI technician saying in June 1993 that "CCTV monitoring sites . . . were all around the compound. . . . This enabled observers to see everything that was going on at the compound without showing themselves." Bureau documents show that the cameras were running as FBI tanks began gassing the compound, and as the buildings caught fire.

"Clearly, whatever those cameras recorded may well reveal the presence of government gunmen on April 19," said attorney Michael Caddell. "If the evidence showed conclusively that there was no government gunfire on April 19, don't you think the government would've trotted this out front and center six years ago?"

"This is clearly a deliberate, intentional cover-up by people high within the FBI hierarchy," Caddell said. "This type of closed-circuit TV system and recording system would've required approval from FBI higher-ups, and they've known for the last six years that this information was withheld."