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Deaths in the Fire at the Branch Davidians' Mount Carmel

Who Bears Responsibility?

Catherine Wessinger

"Everything is in the hands of God right now and we are just waiting on God. Whatever happens, we know that it's the way God wants it to be."

Theresa Nobrega, "Inside Mount Carmel" videotape
made by Branch Davidians during the siege¹

"If they thought we were all brainwashed and such a bunch of crazies, why would the FBI push David or the rest of us to the limit?"

Clive Doyle in *Waco: The Rules of Engagement*²

ABSTRACT: Kenneth G. C. Newport's book, *The Branch Davidians of Waco* (2006) has placed responsibility for the 19 April 1993 fire at Mount Carmel Center, outside Waco, Texas, primarily on the Branch Davidians, arguing that they were motivated to die as a result of their apocalyptic theology of martyrdom. Newport writes that after the siege was initiated by the 28 February assault by agents with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, the Branch Davidians' deaths in a fire were inevitable. On the other hand, listening to conversations recorded by surveillance devices in conjunction with selected negotiation audiotapes, the author found evidence that indicates Federal Bureau of Investigation agents had ample information that the Branch Davidians expected to die in a fire if the community was assaulted a second time. This raises questions about the intentions of FBI agents in proceeding with the 19 April tank and CS gas assault, especially since a recent breakthrough in negotiations likely would have resulted in the Branch Davidians exiting the residence. The author concludes that circumstantial evidence indicates that decision-making FBI agents knowingly applied extreme

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pressure to the Branch Davidians to prompt them to act on their theology of martyrdom, as part of a larger project of destroying evidence of illegal actions committed by federal agents.

Scholars of the conflict in 1993 between David Koresh's Branch Davidians and federal agents at Mount Carmel Center, located ten miles outside Waco, Texas, have articulated different views on whether or not agents with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) deliberately provoked the Branch Davidians into taking actions that would end their lives and the lives of their children in the fire on 19 April.³ The fire was the culmination of a fifty-one-day siege conducted by FBI agents, which began with an assault on the residence by agents with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) on 28 February, and which resulted in the deaths of six Branch Davidians and four ATF agents. During the siege, FBI agents used psychological warfare tactics of blasting irritating, high-decibel sounds and shining bright spotlights at the community throughout the night to cause extreme discomfort and sleep deprivation. This was part of the FBI's policy of "stress escalation" applied to the Branch Davidians.⁴ The fire on 19 April was immediately preceded by a tank and CS gas attack carried out by FBI agents. Seventy-six Branch Davidians died in the fire, including young people, children and two infants *in utero*.

Despite differences about the degree to which federal agents intentionally pushed the Branch Davidians into a corner, in general scholars studying the conflict have taken an "interactionist" approach,⁵ emphasizing how an indeterminate trajectory was shaped by state actions that allowed the conflict to escalate into deadly violence. An exception is the 2006 book by Kenneth G. C. Newport, *The Branch Davidians of Waco*.⁶ Newport focuses on the Branch Davidians' theology as the primary cause of the deaths in the fire. He concludes that due to their apocalyptic theology of martyrdom, once the siege began, the Branch Davidians' deaths in a fire were inevitable.

Among the evidence marshaled to support his thesis, Newport points to an audiotaped Bible study given on 21 March 1978 by Lois Roden (1905–1986), the prophet who was Koresh's predecessor, in which she presents a doctrine that appears to have relevance for the events in 1993. Roden focused on Matthew 3:11, in which John the Baptist says:

"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire. . . ."

She taught that the baptism of fire would be by "full immersion" and not "sprinkling." This baptism of fire would purify the faithful at "Jerusalem,"

understood as being the Branch Davidians' Mount Carmel, at the end of the age, as a "gateway" into the Kingdom.⁷

Newport's book demonstrates that Vernon Howell (1959–1993), based on his spiritual experience while visiting Israel in January 1985, in which he came to a conviction he was God's son and the Endtime Christ, took on the David Koresh identity and taught that he would be killed in an assault by the agents of Babylon. "Babylon" is the metaphor used in the book of Revelation to refer to the sinful government and culture in the final period, which Koresh identified as being the United States. Koresh taught that many of his followers would die with him.

Koresh taught that his followers were the "first fruits" or "wave sheaf," and would have a special role in the Endtime cataclysm and an exalted status in God's Kingdom. After their deaths, Koresh would be resurrected as the Lamb described in Revelation, along with 200 million martyrs "who died for truth's sake."⁸ These martyrs (a reference to the number in the king's army in Rev. 9:16), resurrected as seraphim or fiery flying serpents (Isaiah 14:29), with supernatural powers and flaming faces (Isaiah 13:8), would return as troops in the Lamb's army and carry out the violent chastisement of humanity described in Revelation and Joel 2.⁹ Then God's kingdom would be created on the miraculously elevated Mount Zion (Zech. 14:10) in the Holy Land.¹⁰

While Newport's book is an important scholarly treatment of Davidian and Branch Davidian history and theology, I believe that his analysis neglects the significance of the interactions of federal agents with the Branch Davidians in creating the circumstances leading to the deaths of the majority of the community's members and the scattering of the survivors around the world. Newport fails to ask critical questions of government documents¹¹ and representatives and their accounts of the events in 1993, thereby turning his otherwise significant book into an exoneration of federal agents of responsibility for the deaths on 19 April.

In my own research, I have found it illuminating to listen to audiotapes of conversations inside the residence, recorded by surveillance devices during the siege, in conjunction with selected negotiation audiotapes. I do not rely exclusively on government transcripts of either type of audiotape, and in this article my own transcripts are cited for the most important conversations.¹² I have found that not only were the interactions of FBI agents with the Branch Davidians crucial in determining the final outcome, but there is considerable evidence on the surveillance audiotapes that FBI agents had ample information about the actions the Branch Davidians were likely to take in response to a second assault. Harvard psychiatrist Alan Stone, who produced a report for the Justice Department, confirms that FBI behavioral scientists and negotiators were well aware of the implications of the Branch Davidians' apocalyptic theology of martyrdom, and they warned the on-site commanders

and other FBI officials that lives would be lost if a second assault was carried out.¹³

An FBI memo written by negotiator Byron Sage indicates that during the siege, eleven Special Agents staffed the monitoring room listening to the conversations captured by eleven surveillance devices. Sage's memo details the procedure for "immediate dissemination" of "real time feedback" gleaned from the surveillance devices, along with the monitors' "recommended action," to "tactical and negotiation leaders."¹⁴

Therefore, I conclude that an abundance of circumstantial evidence points to at least certain FBI agents knowingly ordering actions in an assault, which they were aware would push some of the Branch Davidians to act to fulfill prophecies that the community's members would die in a fire. Particularly disturbing is the fact that federal agents undertook the tank and CS gas assault precisely at a time when there had been a breakthrough in negotiations, and Koresh was preparing to lead his people out safely.

Before 28 February 1993 the Branch Davidians were expecting to be attacked by federal agents, since it would fit Koresh's interpretations of the Bible's prophecies and they could see that their community was under surveillance.¹⁵ They were prepared for an attack, a siege, and a final assault, but after the siege began, they were also hoping the final assault that would cause the demise of their community would not happen at that time.¹⁶

There were multiple expectations among the Branch Davidians about the role that fire might play in a final assault. For instance, Koresh taught that the "young man," who brings a message of Jerusalem being inhabited "as towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle" (Zech. 2:4), would be protected from attack by God placing a wall of fire around the city. Zechariah 2:5 speaks of God's promise to Jerusalem that the Lord "will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her."¹⁷ The Branch Davidians expected that at some point they would have to go through the predicted baptism by fire, but they hoped it could be put off into the future.

Koresh and the Branch Davidians were prepared to die for their faith in the Bible's prophecies about their roles in Endtime events, but there was a strong instinct for physical survival inside the residence. Evidence for this can be seen in the Branch Davidians' attempts to negotiate a peaceful resolution to the siege, while remaining faithful to the Bible's prophecies, and in their efforts to survive on 19 April, by donning gas masks, dodging ferret rounds and tanks for six hours, and putting the children and their mothers in what they regarded to be the most fireproof portion of the building—the vault. The deaths of the Branch Davidians in a fire was *not* the inevitable outcome of the siege. Actions of FBI agents, and possibly other federal agents, contributed directly to the deaths on 19 April 1993, and a number of federal agents

were quite aware that the annihilation of the community—including the children—would be the likely result of an assault.

My thesis that federal agents knowingly applied pressure to provoke some Branch Davidians to set the fire and commit murder and suicide rests on circumstantial evidence drawn from available surveillance and negotiation audiotapes and the testimony of a Branch Davidian survivor of the fire, Graeme Craddock.¹⁸ This study also draws on supporting FBI statements and memos, and government and news reports.¹⁹

The outcome of the conflict at Mount Carmel in 1993 was due to the interactions of multiple outside agencies, groups, and individuals with the Branch Davidians.²⁰ There is responsibility for the loss of life on all sides. However, evidence indicates that a circle of federal agents knew the likely violent outcome of applying intense pressure on the Branch Davidians. The federal agents, in comparison to the Branch Davidians, had greater fire power,²¹ technology, legal and other resources, specialists in psychology and behavioral science, personnel, and access to the media, to shape the events in 1993, as well as the dominant public narrative of the events during and after the siege. Dr. Alan Stone's report concludes: "the FBI's noose-tightening tactics may well have precipitated Koresh's decision to commit himself and his followers to this course of mass suicide."²² I therefore place the greatest part of the responsibility for the deaths in the Mount Carmel fire on federal agents, especially those who understood the Branch Davidians' apocalyptic theology of martyrdom and manipulated the Branch Davidians to achieve the demise of the community.

THE EVENTS IN 1993 AT MOUNT CARMEL

The ATF Assault

It has been accepted that ATF commanders' motivation to carry out the "dynamic entry" assault on the residence on 28 February was a desire to generate good publicity to justify the ATF's continued existence and obtain funding in an upcoming congressional budget hearing.²³ In addition to the approximately seventy ATF agents arriving at the front of the residence in cattle trailers, there were agents in three National Guard helicopters flying over Mount Carmel. The Branch Davidians alleged that agents in the helicopters shot at them, but this was denied by the agents.²⁴

After shooting stopped, David Koresh claimed that he had met the ATF agents at the front door to encourage them not to open fire:

I had the front door open so they could clearly see me. Then what happened was, I told them, I said, "Get back. There's women and children here. I want to talk." About that time, all of a sudden, a nine-millimeter round started firing at the front wall.²⁵



Photo 1. The front of the Mount Carmel residence after the shootout with ATF agents on 28 February 1993. Bullet holes are visible in the walls, around the windows, and especially around the right-hand side of the double front door. Government exhibit in the 2000 civil trial.

Koresh backed up and the front door was closed, as both Branch Davidians and ATF agents fired at each other through the double doors. Koresh's father-in-law, Perry Jones (64), received a mortal wound in the abdomen as he stood behind the front door.²⁶ Branch Davidian attorney Wayne Martin (42) immediately dialed 911 from an office on the southeast (front) corner of the building and begged that the shooting stop.²⁷

A total of five Branch Davidians and four ATF agents died as a result of the shootout. A sixth Branch Davidian, Mike Schroeder (29), was shot and killed by ATF agents later in the day as he attempted to walk to Mount Carmel. Koresh received wounds to his wrist and side.

David Koresh Communicates His Apocalyptic Theology

On 28 February, when David Koresh got on the telephone to speak with Lt. Larry Lynch of the McLennan County Sheriff's Department, he started explaining how he saw the situation in light of his interpretations of the Bible's prophecies. When Lynch asked Koresh if they could focus on more immediate concerns, Koresh asserted, "Look, this is life, this is life and death—theology really is life and death."²⁸

Koresh sought to make his theology known to the public right away. He made statements on CNN. He called a KRLD radio talk show on the

evening of 28 February. In the course of his discussion on KRLD, Koresh mentioned that he had taught Robert Rodriguez, an ATF undercover agent, his interpretations of the apocalyptic prophecies, hoping that Rodriguez would convey that information to the ATF commanders, “so . . . they could realize what they’re dealing with.” Koresh linked the ATF raid to the Endtime events and said, “people are going to lose their lives over this. Now the next event—we’re in the Fifth Seal right now—the next event to take place is that the sun and the stars will be darkened” in the Sixth Seal.²⁹ The Fifth Seal in Revelation 6:9-11, which was studied by FBI agents after they took over the siege,³⁰ reads:

And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held;

And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

On 2 March an audiotaped statement was played on both KRLD radio and the Christian Broadcasting Network, in which Koresh conveyed the main points of his apocalyptic theology. The ATF raid confirmed Koresh’s belief that the Branch Davidians would be assaulted and killed immediately prior to other Endtime events. His concern was to disseminate his message as widely as possible so people would have the opportunity to repent and be spared in the Endtime slaughter carried out by the resurrected Lamb and his army. People who prayed to God with humble hearts for mercy would be spared, even though they did not understand the Seven Seals; people who were arrogant and sought to kill him and his people would be punished when Christ returned with “a strong hand.”³¹ Koresh’s concern was to warn people so they could avoid being punished by the slaughter on the dreadful Day of the Lord.³²

Koresh had promised FBI negotiators that if his 2 March tape was played on a national television station and radio that he and the Branch Davidians would come out that same day. But then Koresh said he received a message from God that they should wait.

Alleged Plan for a Group Suicide

During the criminal trial in 1994, two Branch Davidian women who came out during the siege, Kathy Schroeder (34) and Victorine Hollingsworth (59), testified that on 2 March there was a plan for David

Koresh—who believed that he would die soon from his wounds—to be carried out on a stretcher, and some Branch Davidian men would initiate gunfire thus prompting federal agents to shoot at and kill them. Those remaining inside the residence would then use grenades to blow themselves up and some men would shoot individuals who were unable to kill themselves. Kathy Schroeder testified that she was given a grenade to blow up four women and herself. Victorine Hollingsworth testified that Doris Fagan (51) was given a grenade to blow up the group of four older black women in another room.³³ Thus the Branch Davidians would have fulfilled Koresh's prophetic interpretation that the majority of them would die with Koresh in an assault by the agents of Babylon.

If that was indeed the plan—and this is strongly disputed by the Branch Davidian survivors—then the order that Koresh received from God to wait was a positive development. To the public, FBI agents characterized Koresh's change of mind on 2 March as illustrating how he was a manipulative con man who could not be trusted to keep his word.

Evidence that FBI Agents Understood Koresh's Theology during the Siege

FBI agents took charge of the siege on 1 March, having brought in negotiators and the elite Hostage Rescue Team. After David Koresh refused to come out with his people on 2 March, the residence was surrounded by Combat Engineering Vehicles (disarmed tanks),³⁴ and the Branch Davidians' telephone connections to the outside world were cut off. From that point on, Branch Davidians were able to speak by telephone only to FBI negotiators.

FBI agents had fifty-one days to study the theological statements of Koresh and other Branch Davidians, and they had ample information that the Branch Davidians were waiting to see if God willed that they die in a second assault.³⁵ FBI agents had the opportunity to consult Bible scholars who understood the implications of the Fifth Seal for the siege,³⁶ but their advice was ignored. The FBI's own behavioral scientists advised that an aggressive tactical approach would make the Branch Davidians more determined to remain inside and result in loss of life.³⁷ Dr. Alan Stone confirms that the FBI's behavioral scientists "were fully aware that Koresh's followers believed in his teachings and would 'die for his cause'."³⁸ Nevertheless, during the siege, FBI agents made threatening maneuvers in the tanks and insulting personal gestures; the remaining Branch Davidians were punished whenever adults came out—the electricity was turned off, high-decibel sounds were blasted at the residence, and bright spotlights were shone at the building during the night.³⁹ Furthermore, Branch Davidian adults who came out were dressed in orange prison jumpsuits and paraded in manacles and handcuffs before the television cameras, making the remaining adults

reluctant to place themselves in the custody of federal agents. The parents who sent their children out lost custody of them and were unhappy with the care the children were receiving. Dr. Stone characterizes the likely results of the psychological pressure applied to the Branch Davidians as follows:

The pressure strategy as we now know it consisted of shutting off the compound's electricity, putting search lights on the compound all night, playing constant loud noise (including Tibetan prayer chants, the screaming sounds of rabbits being slaughtered, etc.), tightening the perimeter into a smaller and smaller circle in an overwhelming show of advancing armored force, and using CS gas. The constant stress overload is intended to lead to sleep-deprivation and psychological disorientation. In predisposed individuals the combination of physiological disruption and psychological stress can also lead to mood disturbances, transient hallucinations and paranoid ideation. If the constant noise exceeds 105 decibels, it can produce nerve deafness in children as well as in adults. Presumably, the tactical intent was to cause disruption and emotional chaos within the compound. The FBI hoped to break Koresh's hold over his followers. However, it may have solidified this unconventional group's unity in their common misery, a phenomenon familiar to victimology and group psychology.⁴⁰

Despite the lack of trust engendered by the aggressive FBI tactics, a total of fourteen adults and twenty-one children came out during the siege.⁴¹

The surveillance audiotapes reveal several conversations among the Branch Davidians that would have alerted FBI agents that the Branch Davidians were prepared to die, possibly in a fire, if they were assaulted again. It could be speculated that perhaps FBI agents on the ground—despite the advice of the FBI's behavioral scientists and their best negotiators—did not understand the implications of the Branch Davidians' apocalyptic theology of martyrdom, even though Koresh spelled it out in his public statements early in the siege and Branch Davidians made references to it throughout the negotiations. But Bob Ricks, who served as the FBI's spokesman during press conferences during the siege, made a statement that indicated that FBI agents *did* understand the salient points of Branch Davidian theology: "He has to be slain, and there has to be a sufficient number of martyrs—those of his followers also have to be slain."⁴²

Evidence from Surveillance and Negotiation Audiotapes

Although David Koresh and the Branch Davidians believed it was possible that God willed them to die at that time to fulfill the rest of the prophecy of the Fifth Seal, that outcome was by no means a foregone conclusion. The Branch Davidians were doing what all millennialists

do: they were reading the signs of the time. Eugene V. Gallagher has stressed that the Branch Davidians were reading their Bibles and interpreting its prophecies in light of the events that were occurring. According to Gallagher:

One of the primary tasks of an apocalyptic prophet is not only to declare the imminence of the end but also to chart an appropriate path of human response. Visions of the end, even in textual form, remain flexible in the hands of an interpreter who is sensitive to the nuances of context. When changes occur in the lives of an interpreter or the interpreter's community, the meaning that a given text has for them will also change. The millennial prophet always strives to read both text and context in terms of each other. Just as the interpreter can discern the hidden meaning of both history and the present by reading them through the lens of the prophetic text, so also changes in context challenge the interpreter to discover how the text remains relevant.⁴³

Koresh and the Branch Davidians were reading the *context*, i.e., the actions of the federal agents, in light of the *text* of the Bible's prophecies. They were waiting to see what God had in store for them. Koresh stressed in his 28 February KRLD interview that whether or not the situation was resolved without further bloodshed would be determined by the actions of the federal agents; his preference was to negotiate so he could present his teaching on the Seven Seals to potential converts.

On 15 March, after Steve Schneider (43), Koresh's right-hand man, and Wayne Martin reported to Koresh about their meeting outside the residence with Sheriff Jack Harwell and FBI negotiator Byron Sage, Koresh got on a CB radio and sent FBI agents a message (emphasis added):

This is Ravenous Bird. We just want to thank you for your decent conduct that you just recently showed us when our men were talking out front with Harwell and the negotiator. And we're also thankful that at the end of the conversation, a couple of the mighty men back behind the tank finally had a smile on his face. *That's all pluses, and that's what we need here. We need more pluses instead of minuses.*

This is Ravenous Bird again. Let everybody just rest assured *that you act decent, so we're going to act decent and we're all human beings, and we're all under God, and under this country. Let's see if we can't work this out. Let's don't get itchy. We won't get itchy. Let's just relax and think about mamas and papas and babies, and thank God for potatoes, and pretty soon, we, hopefully, can resolve all of this. Thank you.*⁴⁴

Later on 15 March Steve Schneider told a negotiator that the Branch Davidians had heard Dr. Phillip Arnold of Reunion Institute in Houston on the radio discussing the Bible's prophecies. They were impressed with his knowledge and asked Koresh if he would be willing to discuss or even debate the meaning of the Bible's texts with Arnold. Koresh

agreed. Schneider told the negotiator, "If this guy can show something else, or equal, or anything else, or stump him, they're out of here, they told me." Schneider asserted, "That's been the biggest thing from day one, you know his whole thing about the Seven Seals. That's why the people came here. *That is the bottom line.*" Schneider expressed interest in hearing Dr. Arnold himself, and he assured the negotiator that Koresh was willing to have the discussion with Arnold:

He will be willing to allow whatever. His main interest, Mike, is spiritual things, obviously. You know, the Bible And if he is not able to open these Seals, he'll tell you he's *nobody*, he's *nothing*, this is a farce, it always has been. He'll acknowledge it right now. But he says, until He says, right now I can show the Seals.⁴⁵

Other than sending in an audiotape of Dr. Arnold's radio discussion, FBI agents did not follow up on this request from the Branch Davidians. Negotiators had decided not to pay any more attention to the Branch Davidians' "Bible babble."⁴⁶

On 1 April Arnold and Dr. James Tabor, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, conducted a discussion of the Bible's prophecies on a radio talk show for the benefit of Koresh and the Branch Davidians. They did not attempt to argue that Koresh's interpretations of the prophecies were incorrect, but they kept their discussion within the parameters of the Branch Davidians' Bible-based worldview. Their conversation respected the claims Koresh made for his status as the apocalyptic Christ and Lamb. They suggested that the waiting period of the "little season" mentioned in the Fifth Seal could be longer than a few months. The waiting period could be a number of years, so they encouraged Koresh and the Branch Davidians to come out. Koresh would be able to disseminate his message more widely if he came out and was taken into custody.⁴⁷

On 2 April Steve Schneider told a negotiator that they would come out after Passover, which lasted from 6–13 April. I have wondered if Koresh was waiting to see if something would happen during Passover week. Given the Branch Davidians' theology of martyrdom, I suspected that the Branch Davidians were waiting to see if they would be killed during Passover. On 10–11 April Koresh sent out two letters signed "Yahweh Koresh." Written in the style of an Old Testament prophet speaking God's word, warning of impending judgment unless sinful ways are repented and changed, the 11 April letter can be read as a warning to federal agents not to attack the Branch Davidians (*italics added*):

My hand made heaven and earth, My hand also shall bring it to the end. Read Psalm 50 and learn to be wise. *Respect your brother David and those who have learned of Me—from Him.*

Your sins are more than you can bear. *Show mercy and kindness and you shall receive mercy and kindness.*

*The Seven Seals are the last prophecy to a lost world, consider it and what it means! You have a chance to learn My Salvation. Do not find yourselves to be fighting against Me.*⁴⁸

Steve Schneider can be heard on a surveillance audiotape recorded on 13 April, the last day of Passover, revealing what Koresh had been awaiting. Schneider said that Koresh was “kind of down” because (emphasis added):

He was expecting to be taken out of here Sunday, you know *the wave sheaf could go up*, and *we didn't because of our sins*, you know. He was bothered because he thought he had done everything he could do, and what's it going to take? You know, he's been in this for years and years and years⁴⁹

It appears that under the conditions of strict rationing during the siege, some of the adults had been consuming extra food and water.⁵⁰ The explanation that a predicted event does not occur due to the sinfulness or shortcomings of the believers is well known to sociologists of religion.⁵¹

Schneider's description of Koresh's dejection because the Branch Davidians were not lifted out of earthly existence during Passover is consistent with Graeme Craddock's description of the three main possibilities that Koresh taught about how the siege would end. Craddock testified in a federal grand jury proceeding that Koresh taught that the two most likely possibilities were that they would be translated up to heaven without dying, or they would be killed “either by bullet or whatever means” in an assault. The third possibility, which according to Craddock was not discussed much “until after the siege began,” was that they would come out, be taken into custody, and subsequently be delivered by God the Father.⁵²

In this same conversation inside the residence on 13 April, Schneider was asked by other Branch Davidians to summarize a talk given by Koresh the day before about the two main options for escaping the siege. He did so while looking at someone else's notes. Koresh had listed the ways they might be taken out of the residence: tank, fire, bullets, or “as living wave sheaf.” Schneider thought the latter was unlikely due to their sins. If there was an assault, Koresh taught that they would be “coming to the birth” and “travailing” as a woman giving birth, stressing that they needed to be studying their Bibles intensively, because the events predicted in the Bible were happening at that time. Koresh had stressed, “the worst of all sins is *doubt*, doubting God and not believing him.” Schneider emphasized, “You have to believe you are living wave sheaf. You have to believe that. There can't be some sort of doubt or

anything.”⁵³ Schneider’s lengthy summary of Koresh’s talk is very clear on the audiotape.

On the same day, Scott Sonobe (35) gave a pithy summary of this same talk by Koresh. He said, “But you know the whole thing really revolved around travelling—to give birth. That’s for everybody here. Having given birth to an experience that is on and about the truth.”

You’re gonna get to the point where you see no way out—you know you’re gonna die, and then you’re gonna trust God, even if it’s the last second before the tank hits you. Even if it’s a foot away and you go, “God!” Even if it’s for a second—the last second before it runs you over, or you burn, or you get shot or whatever—you’re gonna bring forth, buddy.⁵⁴

Sonobe was speaking very softly while he made these statements, but I was able to hear him by listening to an unenhanced audio file using earphones.

On 14 April—the day after Passover ended—Koresh sent out a letter to FBI agents saying that God had given him permission to write down his interpretations of the Seven Seals of Revelation in a “little book.” This letter indicates that Koresh was ready to implement the third possible option for resolving the siege—they would come out, but their doing so had to conform to biblical prophecy. The Branch Davidians’ belief system required that their actions correspond to biblical prophecies, but this was also necessary for Koresh to maintain his charismatic authority. His status in the community was based on members’ belief that he was divinely inspired to interpret the Bible’s prophecies, had unlocked the secrets of the Seven Seals, and hence was the Lamb of Revelation and the Endtime Christ. Also, since 1985 Koresh had identified himself with the Seventh Angel, which Revelation 10:2 describes as holding a little book.⁵⁵ Nothing violent or miraculous had happened over Passover, so Koresh shifted to interpreting the Bible’s prophecies in a manner that would enable him and his followers to exit the residence, while preserving his charisma. Koresh’s 14 April letter said that after his manuscript was completed, it would be given to Drs. Arnold and Tabor for safekeeping and then he and the Branch Davidians would come out.

On 16 April Koresh reported that he had completed his interpretation of the First Seal and the Branch Davidians began requesting word processing equipment to facilitate production of the manuscript. They made the request again on 17 April. The equipment was finally delivered on 18 April,⁵⁶ but by then FBI agents were preparing to carry out an assault.

18 April Warnings of Branch Davidian Expectations of Death in a Fire

On 18 April FBI agents in tanks began demolishing and removing the vehicles surrounding the residence in preparation for an assault the next

morning. In an audiotaped conversation, which I have transcribed in full (until the tape cuts off) in *How the Millennium Comes Violently*,⁵⁷ Koresh told a negotiator named Henry that the tanks were destroying evidence that would support the Branch Davidians' contention that on 28 February the ATF agents had done most of the shooting: "What are they doing? Are you covering up for the ATF? That's exactly what it appears you are doing."

Koresh asked, "What do you men *really* want?" He warned Henry that the FBI agents were fixing to "step across the ribbon" and "ruin the safety of me and my children. My life, the lives of my wives, the lives of my friends, *my family*." He said that he was being put "into the corner of the box," and "all I can say is that if you want to place this in the history books as one of the saddest days in the world."

Henry argued that his commanders wanted to see some progress, and Koresh told him that they did not realize the significance of the progress he was making on writing his "little book." At that point Henry got into a shouting match with Koresh and the recording was cut off.⁵⁸

Koresh's argument with Henry was also picked up by a couple of surveillance devices, which reveal that about an hour afterwards Steve Schneider and Scott Sonobe—laughing and joking excitedly—returned to a common gathering area just after speaking with Koresh. They did not announce directly that the community could expect the prophecies of fire to be fulfilled soon, since the Branch Davidians were aware that the residence was bugged, but they came very close to doing so:

Schneider excitedly says: "I hope so, God, I hope so!"

Woman asks: "What's going on? Anything good?"

Schneider replies: "It may be scary!"

[*Scott Sonobe comments. Unclear.*]

Woman asks: "Well, what is it?"

Schneider: "Yeah, what you've been hearing. He's been talking about that two or three days. Now we're making an effort—I *think*, he didn't say yet—we'll make an effort to do exactly that."

Sonobe: "I said there's nothing like a good fire."

Schneider then made a joke with Sonobe, who before he had converted used to say that he preferred to be a charcoal briquette in hell than become a Branch Davidian:⁵⁹

Schneider: "You always wanted to be a charcoal briquette!" [*Schneider and Sonobe laugh.*]

Sonobe: "I told him, he goes 'your prophecy.'" [*Sonobe laughs.*]

Schneider: "That's YOUR prophecy." [*Schneider and Sonobe laugh.*]

Schneider: "You and your prophecy [*unclear*]."

Sonobe: "I told him that there's nothing like a good fire to bring us to the birth."

Schneider: "I know."

Woman [laughs]: "Now I know what's going on."

Then Schneider gave an impression of the first man landing on the Sun. This apparent joke may have had theological significance beyond the expected fire since David Koresh had taught that “Koresh” meant either “sun” or “shepherd” in Hebrew.

Schneider: “Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh—my impression of the first man landing on the sun. Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh. Darn our controls are jammed. Here comes Mr. Sun!”

Later on this same surveillance audiotape, people can be heard speaking excitedly about the Bible’s prophecies being fulfilled soon. A woman expressed a very real fear, but she laughed as she said it: “There’s such a thing as fear [*electronic sound from outside*]. I mean, you know you read it, you always think it’s *far away*. But it’s here.”⁶⁰

After his argument with Henry on 18 April, Koresh told a negotiator named John Cox that the present situation involved “the Lamb coming and trying to reveal the Seven Seals and they don’t want to listen and then some things happen and finally God gets pushed in a corner to where God has to fulfill the Seven Seals.”⁶¹

Later in the day Schneider told negotiators that they would no longer comply with FBI agents’ orders that no one could be in the building’s central tower and that no one could look out the windows. Schneider referred to Bible prophecy, especially Jeremiah 27:18, which says, “Zion shall be plowed like a field,” and asked, “Could this be it?” He told a negotiator named Dwayne that soon the earth would be shaken, the sun and moon would be darkened, and “Judgments are impending soon. No doubt about it.” Schneider complained about the American Constitution being ripped up by the events at Mount Carmel, but said that the agents could “burn the place down.”⁶² Schneider warned Henry that if FBI agents began destroying the residence, “We’re going to be doing something different.” After Henry expressed the hope that there “will be a time to resurrect, to rebuild,” Schneider replied, “I think there will be a time to resurrect, but I’m talking about from the dead.”⁶³

FBI agents had ample indication that the Branch Davidians were resolved to die in a fire if they were assaulted a second time.

EVENTS OF THE 19 APRIL ASSAULT AND FIRE

FBI agents began the tank and CS gas assault at 6:00 A.M. on 19 April. Hand-held grenade launchers were used to hurl in more than 400 ferret rounds dispersing CS gas, and the tanks’ booms sprayed the chemical directly into the building. FBI agents reported that at the beginning of the assault someone threw a telephone out the front door. Branch Davidian survivors denied this and reported that the tanks had severed

the telephone line. A surveillance device picked up Steve Schneider at the front door directing Pablo Cohen (38) to go outside and hold up the severed telephone line so agents could see it. Negotiator Byron Sage, his voice amplified by loudspeakers, acknowledged that the agents saw the broken line and directed the Branch Davidians to pull the line inside while the agents tried to locate a new telephone for the purpose of expediting the Branch Davidians' exit. Schneider stayed at the front door for a time, directing the attempted repair of the telephone line so the Branch Davidians could say "one last thing to them" about Koresh's progress the night before on his Seven Seals manuscript. But then Schneider said, "I'll be upstairs, by David." The telephone line was not repaired and a man could be heard praying aloud in the style of the Psalms for mercy and courage.⁶⁴

CS gas burns the skin and the internal mucous membranes, which can cause acute bronchial pneumonia, vomiting and asphyxiation. The CS gas (chlorobenzylidene malonitrile) converts into cyanide upon contact with water, which in the body causes pain, edema and leakage of fluid from the capillaries. CS gas also converts to cyanide when it burns. CS gas is intended for outdoor use to control crowds, and is not recommended for use in enclosed spaces. CS gas, suspended in methylene chloride, was sprayed into the building in a stream of carbon dioxide as a dispersant.⁶⁵ The Branch Davidian adults had gas masks, but there were no child-sized gas masks.

The children and their mothers gathered in the safest part of the building—the concrete vault at the bottom of the central tower. This vault had survived a previous fire, which destroyed the Administration Building in 1983, with all of its contents intact.⁶⁶ In 1993, part of the vault was used as a storeroom for weapons, and a walk-in refrigerator was also located there. Wet towels were used to fill in the spaces the gas masks left around the children's heads⁶⁷ (note the effects described above when CS gas combines with water). The tanks began driving into the building to deliver the CS through their booms. The government reports do not indicate that a tank delivered gas directly into the vault, however, photographs show that beginning at 11:31 A.M. a tank drove through the front of the building to where the doorway of the vault was located and gassed that area until 11:55.⁶⁸ Clive Doyle has told me that this was an open doorway. After the fire, FBI spokesman Bob Ricks reported to a press conference that the tank had succeeded in inserting gas directly into the vault.⁶⁹

Dr. Alan Stone reports that the adverse effects of CS gas have not been extensively studied, although individuals who have served in the military have felt its intensely painful effects during training. Stone feels that the serious damage that CS gas can do, especially in enclosed spaces, was downplayed in briefings given to Attorney General Janet Reno to obtain her authorization for the assault.



Photo 2. A tank on 19 April 1993 is seen entering the front of the residence, apparently aiming for the concrete vault at the base of the central tower. The gymnasium in the back of the building has been demolished by another tank. Government exhibit in the 2000 civil trial.

Ironically, while the most compelling factor used to justify the Waco plan was the safety of the children, the insertion of the C.S. gas, in my opinion, actually threatened the safety of the children. The Justice Department has informed me that because of the high winds at Waco, the C.S. gas was dispersed; they believe it played no part in the *death by suffocation, revealed at autopsy, of most of the infants, toddlers, and children*. The commander on the ground, however, is of the opinion that the C.S. gas did have some effect, because the wind did not begin to blow strongly until two hours after he ordered the operation to begin. [. . .] I find it hard to accept a deliberate plan to insert C.S. gas for forty-eight hours in a building with so many children. *It certainly makes it more difficult to believe that the health and safety of the children was our primary concern.*⁷⁰ [Emphasis added.]

A tank in the rear of the building demolished the gymnasium and began driving through it toward the interior of the building. At 11:54 A.M. another tank began driving through the front of the building on the east side of the vault toward the same interior area. The two tanks were heading toward the area where Koresh and Schneider were located on the second floor. At 12:05 P.M. the front tank shifted its attack to the southeast corner of the building. Then the two tanks backed out of the building. At 12:09 a fire became visible in the second-floor southeast bedroom window.⁷¹ By 12:11 infrared photography (FLIR) taken from an airplane circling overhead revealed additional fires in the cafeteria and gymnasium areas.



Photo 3. The tank in the front of the building has relocated east to enter the building at the double front doors. A tank will begin to enter the building from the back. Attorney David Hardy alleges that the tanks were aiming for David Koresh and Steve Schneider on the second floor. Government exhibit in the 2000 civil trial.



Photo 4. A fire is visible in the southeast bedroom window on the second floor at 12:09 P.M. Government exhibit in the 2000 civil trial.



Photo 5. FLIR imagery shows that at 12:11 A.M. the fire on the front southeast corner has spread to the chapel, and that there are fires in the back in the gymnasium, and in the kitchen area to the west side of the tower. Government exhibit in the 2000 civil trial.

Subsequently, FBI agents claimed that enhanced surveillance audiotapes revealed discussions among the Branch Davidians about pouring fuel, early in the morning from about 6:05 A.M., when the assault began, through about 7:23 A.M. FBI agents claim that surveillance audiotapes record Branch Davidians discussing lighting fires from about 11:27 A.M. until about 11:54 A.M.—the time period that corresponds with the gassing of the vault. The tanks entering the building make a terrible racket and I have not yet located these statements on the audiotapes. FBI agents asserted that the Branch Davidians set the fire, stating that snipers observed persons inside the residence pouring fuel at the front door, in the chapel, and on the second floor on the southeast area of the building.⁷² Surviving Branch Davidians responded that the tanks knocked over containers of fuel that were in the building.

Branch Davidian survivor Graeme Craddock subsequently testified that he saw a person, whom he could not identify, in the chapel pouring fuel. Pablo Cohen screamed, “Wait. Wait. Not inside. Outside.” Cohen told this person, “Don’t pour it inside. Pour it outside.” A few minutes later, Craddock heard Mark Wendel (40)⁷³ shout from upstairs, “The building’s on fire.” Craddock heard Wendel shout a second time. Wendel’s third shout, as heard by Craddock, was, “Light the fire,” but Pablo Cohen in the chapel shouted, “Wait. Wait. Find out.” Craddock reported that a conversation ensued between Cohen and Wendel—shouting at each other through the chapel ceiling—with Cohen urging that they wait and find out, and during which Craddock heard the command, “Don’t light the fire.” By the time the fire got started, Craddock left the chapel seeking shelter, which he found inside a cinderblock structure in the courtyard next to the water tower.⁷⁴

In 1999 Col. Rodney L. Rawlings, the head military liaison present during the Mount Carmel operation, told Lee Hancock of the *Dallas Morning News* that he and FBI agents were listening to conversations captured by surveillance devices in real time as the assault was carried out, and that there were many more surveillance devices in place than the ones for which the FBI has released audiotapes. He told Hancock that the children and mothers inside the vault could be heard “crying, talking, and praying.” Rawlings revealed that information from the surveillance devices helped the FBI commanders direct the tanks to targeted areas of the building. Rawlings said that he heard Koresh give the order in real time to set the fire. FBI agent Bob Ricks stated in a press conference shortly after the fire that surveillance devices revealed that Koresh gave the order to light the fire, and then retracted that order, and then gave the order again, and then was shot by Steve Schneider. This surveillance audiotape has never been produced by the FBI, and Ricks later said that this statement was a misinterpretation on his part.⁷⁵ However, the scenario initially described by Ricks sounds similar to Craddock’s report of Mark Wendel shouting, “Light the fire!” with Pablo Cohen contradicting him, followed by another command, “Don’t light the fire!” It is likely that this was followed by another command to light the fire.

Nine people escaped the burning building. Graeme Craddock took shelter in a cinderblock structure while the inferno raged around him. Derek Lovelock (37), Jaime Castillo (24), David Thibodeau (24), and Clive Doyle (52) escaped through a hole knocked in the chapel wall by a tank, and walked down the front driveway to be taken into custody. Renos Avraam (29) escaped from a second floor bedroom onto the roof, where he jumped to the ground. Marjorie Thomas (30) and Misty Ferguson (17), both of whom were severely burned, jumped from the second floor in the front of the building. Ruth Riddle (29) also jumped from the second floor in the front of the building. She broke her ankle and fell back toward the building when she tried to walk, and FBI agents rushed in to pull her away from the fire.⁷⁶

Later it was discovered that Riddle had in her pocket a disk on which was saved Koresh’s interpretation of the First Seal of Revelation.⁷⁷

The intention of both the Branch Davidians and FBI agents towards the children remains a matter of serious concern. Both parties were aware that their chosen courses of action were putting the children’s lives in danger. Both sides were “gambling with death.”⁷⁸ In Koresh’s 28 February statements on KRLD radio, he said: “If you kill the babies for what they say, their Grandfather in heaven—you know God the Father is also a Grandfather now—you’re going to learn the hard way, and I don’t want that to happen.”⁷⁹ This was Koresh’s warning of the Lord’s judgment during the violent events of the Endtime. During the siege, Koresh’s legal wife, Rachel Howell Koresh, told FBI negotiator John



Photo 6. FBI agents and government representatives have alleged that Ruth Riddle was rescued by FBI agents after she attempted to run back into the burning building. However, a sequence of government photos supports Clive Doyle's account reported to him by Ruth Riddle that she broke her ankle upon jumping out of the second floor of the building, tried to walk, but fell down. Then she was rescued by FBI agents. Riddle is seen here sitting on the ground in front of the building. Government exhibit in the 2000 civil trial.

Cox that her children were safe remaining with her, unless the agents did something to hurt them. Cox replied that the FBI did not hurt children.⁸⁰ In 1999 Col. Rawlings told Lee Hancock that FBI agents had relied upon the assumption that when the children suffered from the CS gas, the mothers would pick up them up and remove them from the building, and that the other Branch Davidians would follow.⁸¹ This information raises the specter that FBI agents gassed the children as part of the assault plan. James H. Brannon, attorney for David Koresh's paternal grandmother, Jean Holub, has stated that this plan amounted to the FBI torturing children in an attempt to make the parents comply with their wishes.⁸²

The volunteer fire department in nearby Bellmead was called at 12:13, and the fire trucks arrived at 12:34. However, Special-Agent-in-Charge Jeffrey Jamar held the fire trucks back, explaining later that he did not want to expose firefighters to gunshots being fired by the Branch Davidians. No evidence has been presented by the FBI to show that the Branch Davidians were shooting at targets outside the building on 19 April and the government's aerial photographs make it clear that at the height of the fire this was unlikely. At 12:41 when a fire truck was



Photo 7. An aerial shot shows that a fire truck was not permitted to start spraying water until after the residence had burned down completely. Government exhibit in the 2000 civil trial.

permitted to approach and turn on the water hose, nothing but smoking ash remained of the residence.⁸³

In the 1995 congressional hearings, Jamar stated that the “fire plan” was to hold the fire trucks back.⁸⁴

Attorney David Hardy reports that audio for the FLIR videotape, which was being shot from an airplane overhead, and obtained by him through Freedom of Information requests, reveals Dick Rogers, the commander of the Hostage Rescue Team, calling frantically for fire trucks while Jamar held them back. At 12:35 Rogers radioed to Jamar that HRT agents were going to search a tunnel to see if they could get out any children who might have taken shelter there. Jamar replied, “No one else, I hope.”⁸⁵

Seventy-six Branch Davidians of all ages, including twenty-three children ages fifteen and younger, died in the fire. I include in the number of children the two infants who were *in utero*. Fifteen of the children were eight years old or younger. David Koresh was the father of fourteen children who died in the fire, including the two fetuses. The only structures left standing after the fire were the concrete vault and the metal water tower.

Immediately after the fire, ATF agents raised three flags on the Branch Davidians’ flagpole: the American flag, the state of Texas flag, and the ATF flag. Subsequently, agents posed for various “trophy photos,” one flexing his arm muscles over the little red flags in the ashes

marking where Branch Davidian bodies were found.⁸⁶ After the FBI agents completed their investigation, the entire site was bulldozed and the concrete vault was demolished.

CONCLUSION

My study of selected surveillance and negotiation audiotapes indicates there were multiple statements made by Branch Davidians that would have informed FBI agents that the Branch Davidians expected to die in a fire if the community was assaulted a second time. Mark Swett and J. Phillip Arnold also came to the conclusion that surveillance audio indicated that Koresh was prepared to die in the event of another assault. They point to a statement made by Koresh to Schneider on 16 March, in which Koresh said, “My work is finished. I don’t need to hang around here. I’ve already been shot, understand? I’ve been rejected. . . . All I need to do is cover it, cock the pistol back, have my thumb on the trigger and my mind on the Psalms.”⁸⁷

Listening to surveillance audiotapes in conjunction with negotiation tapes reveals that on 18 April there were not isolated statements made by Branch Davidians about a fire, as alleged by the government,⁸⁸ but the statements announcing a fire and the fulfillment of prophecies were made in the context of failed negotiations and obvious preparations being made by FBI agents for an assault.

The Branch Davidians would not have regarded their actions as a mass suicide, but instead as choosing martyrdom in resistance to the aggression of agents aligned with Satan, and in obedience to God’s prophecies revealed in the Bible. The FBI’s gassing of the children and mothers inside the vault was probably taken as the sign that the time had come for the rest of the community’s members to die to fulfill the prophecies. Similar to early Christian martyrs, the Branch Davidians saw martyrdom as a “second baptism” and the means to attain eternal life.⁸⁹ However, the testimony of survivor Graeme Craddock, and FBI agent Bob Ricks’ initial—but later retracted—account, indicate considerable confusion inside the residence, perhaps even on Koresh’s part, about whether or not it was time to light the fires and die by various means. The reports of diverse reactions to the prospect of imminent martyrdom sound realistic. The Branch Davidian apocalyptic theology of martyrdom did not prevent individuals from seeking to escape death, and some managed to get out of the burning building.

In listening to the surveillance audiotapes, I noted that Koresh’s voice was heard in the March surveillance audiotapes,⁹⁰ but his voice disappeared in the April surveillance audiotapes. Did Koresh relocate to a part of the building that was not bugged? Or have the audiotapes containing Koresh’s conversations and Bible studies been held back? Why have the audiotapes from the additional surveillance devices mentioned

by Col. Rawlings, including the one that picked up orders to light the fire, been withheld by the FBI? Is it possible that the unreleased surveillance and negotiation audiotapes would reveal that FBI agents had ample information concerning the Branch Davidians' apocalyptic theology, and thus would reveal how agents manipulated the Branch Davidians into acting on their commitment to martyrdom? Is it also possible that the surveillance audio mentioned by Rawlings, in which he heard the women and children in the vault, would contradict the conclusions of the Danforth Final Report that CS gas was dispersed first seventeen feet, then twenty-eight feet away from the door of the vault, and that there were no deaths on 19 April caused by CS gas?⁹¹ The missing audiotapes are part of an extensive pattern of federal agents holding back or destroying evidence about this case.

Branch Davidian survivor Clive Doyle's question, in an epigraph at the beginning of this article, about federal agents' intention in applying intense pressure on the Branch Davidians remains very pertinent. Did federal agents' systematic destruction of evidence—the vehicles surrounding the building; the building and its roof through which Branch Davidians alleged ATF agents in helicopters fired; and the right-hand metal front door behind which Perry Jones was standing when he received a mortal gunshot wound—which would have supported the Branch Davidians' contention that ATF agents did most of the shooting on 28 February, extend to the Branch Davidian adults and children themselves? Even the Branch Davidians' corpses were ultimately rendered useless as evidence when a refrigeration unit mysteriously stopped working.⁹² Was the bulldozing of the burned-out site of the residence and the demolishing of the concrete vault an attempt to cover up evidence?

Ken Fawcett, a Texan who spent the months in 1993 recording video footage of Mount Carmel captured from television satellite transmissions, reports that after the live news coverage of the assault on 19 April stopped about 1:00 P.M., Channel 25 continued filming until about 6:30 P.M. Fawcett interprets this footage as showing agents engaging in activities that caused the fire in the vault to continue blazing for several hours after the building had burned completely down. The smoke from the fire in the vault could be seen for the rest of the afternoon. Although this same vault had completely protected its contents in the fire of 1983, the procedure Fawcett believes was carried out by agents on 19 April 1993 would have thoroughly incinerated the vault's contents, including the corpses.⁹³

Federal agents engaged in systematic destruction of evidence in the Branch Davidian case. In addition to the missing ATF videotapes of the first assault, a videotape made by the photographer for the Tarrant County coroner was confiscated by FBI agents and "lost." Texas Rangers testified at the congressional hearings that the crime scene was demolished by FBI agents and they felt certain that agents lied to them.⁹⁴ In



Photo 8. The concrete vault after the fire. The small flags mark where bodies or body parts were located. Government exhibit in the 2000 civil trial.

fact, the discovery in 1999, thanks to Freedom of Information requests by attorney David Hardy, that—despite FBI denials for six years—pyrotechnic⁹⁵ tear gas rounds were used during the tank and tear gas assault, prompted Attorney General Reno to appoint former Senator John Danforth as Special Counsel to investigate whether federal agents engaged in wrong-doing that caused the deaths of Branch Davidians on 19 April 1993. The Danforth Final Report concluded that the pyrotechnic rounds in question did not cause the fire, because they were aimed at a tunnel 75 feet from the residence early in the morning. But the Report noted that HRT Commander Dick Rogers did not correct Attorney General Janet Reno and FBI Director William Sessions when they testified in 1995 congressional hearings that no pyrotechnic devices were used on 19 April, and that the FBI did not release FLIR tapes recording Rogers' order to fire the pyrotechnic rounds until 1999.⁹⁶ The Danforth Final Report also noted that portions of the expended pyrotechnic rounds were missing, and that agents on-site exercised discretion in throwing away items they deemed irrelevant to the investigation.⁹⁷

The Branch Davidians represent a case of a group and its leader acting to prevent the failure of prophecy. They believed that their obedience to the prophecies in the Bible, as interpreted by David Koresh,

would result in their participation in God's kingdom as the vanguard of the faithful known as the "wave sheaf." As long as federal agents appeared to be fulfilling the prophecy that God's people would be attacked, killing Koresh and most of his followers, then the majority of the Branch Davidians fearfully, but faithfully, conformed themselves to the fulfillment of that prophecy. If the federal agents had de-escalated actions that seemed to fulfill that prophecy, then Koresh would have had the scope to highlight different prophecies to enable the group to come out of the residence, where water was very scarce and food would eventually run out. Thus, when nothing happened during Passover, Koresh devised a plan to fulfill the "prophecy" of the Seventh Angel holding a "little book," by saying they would come out after he wrote down his interpretation of the Seven Seals of Revelation. Koresh was making progress on this project, as evidenced by the data disk brought out of the burning building by Ruth Riddle. However, once it became clear to the Branch Davidians on 18 and 19 April that the FBI assault would be carried out to the extent of destroying the residence and gassing inhabitants—particularly targeting the children—the Branch Davidians reverted to the original prophecy that most of them would die in a final assault carried out by the agents of satanic "Babylon."

I have argued earlier that the Branch Davidians were an assaulted millennial group.⁹⁸ Indeed, they were assaulted twice by federal agents and, during the interval, were subjected to the intense pressures of psychological warfare. My most recent research reported here suggests that in the final moments, the Branch Davidians likely became a fragile millennial group,⁹⁹ whose members may have directed violence towards fellow members and themselves by setting fires and carrying out shootings, to preserve the ultimate concern of remaining faithful to God's prophecies as they understood them. Graeme Craddock's testimony about the contradictory orders to set the fire, and the fact that a few people managed to get out of the burning building, indicates that not all the Branch Davidians were agreed about setting and dying in a fire. This sounds like a realistic scenario in which different people had different views about group martyrdom, as well as different opportunities to escape the destruction.

The Branch Davidians were in a "vise"¹⁰⁰ that impelled many of them to choose a scenario in which the majority of the community would die. The Jonestown residents in 1978 were in a similar vise consisting of pressures applied by concerned relatives, federal agencies, the media, defectors, and the perceived invasion of their community by United States government representatives. A number of Jonestown residents finally succumbed to the pressure by killing members of the invading group, other residents and then themselves. As with the Branch Davidians, not every resident of Jonestown was prepared to take these extreme actions and some managed to escape.¹⁰¹

In the case of Jonestown, it can be argued that the outside persons applying the pressures were concerned about the residents and did not anticipate the violent results. However, FBI agents at Mount Carmel had fifty-one days to talk with Koresh and the Branch Davidians and to study the conversations captured on the surveillance devices. The Branch Davidians did not conceal their apocalyptic theology of martyrdom. The pressures (“stress escalation”) that were increased whenever adults came out of the residence, the systematic destruction and suppression of evidence by federal agents, and especially the implausibility of agents *not* paying close attention to the conversations revealed by surveillance devices, lead me to conclude that a number of federal agents understood that the likely consequence of a second assault would be a fire and the deaths of most of the Branch Davidians, including the children. The circumstantial evidence indicates that some federal agents knowingly applied extreme pressure to the Branch Davidians, so they would act on their apocalyptic theology of martyrdom. The Branch Davidians were manipulated by federal agents—who seem to have been very concerned with the destruction of evidence—into committing what people outside the Branch Davidian community of faith regard as mass suicide.

Listening to the surveillance audiotapes, which the federal government has used to exonerate its agents, in conjunction with relevant negotiation tapes, suggests that some federal agents were well aware that the Branch Davidians expected to die in a fire in the event they were assaulted a second time. This has been confirmed by Dr. Alan Stone’s independent report, which draws on his interviews with FBI behavioral scientists and negotiators. However, the on-site commander, Special-Agent-in-Charge Jeffrey Jamar, asserted to Dr. Stone that “Koresh ended it all in mass suicide not because of the FBI tactical strategy, but because that was always his intention.”¹⁰² That is the argument presented by Kenneth Newport in his book.

The preponderance of the circumstantial evidence indicates that it is implausible that decision-making federal agents on-site were unaware of the significance of the Branch Davidians’ apocalyptic theology of martyrdom. This was confirmed by retired Col. Rawlings in 1999, when he told Lee Hancock that he and FBI agents could hear conversations picked up by surveillance devices inside the residence from a monitoring station in a house just across the street.¹⁰³ Rawlings reported that FBI agents and he heard the conversations on 18 April announcing an imminent fire to fulfill prophecies, and they understood that a fire would be the likely result of an assault. He reported that conversations about spreading fuel on the morning of 19 April were heard by FBI agents in real time and their import was understood. He also reported that they heard Koresh give the order to light the fires after the children were gassed. “He said, ‘OK. Our time is

now. It's time to put the children away,' or 'to sleep,' or some such words. When we heard this, it was, 'Oh my God. How can anyone do this?' It got real quiet in the command center. We could not believe this was going on."

Col. Rawlings said he then heard Mr. Koresh tell his chief lieutenant, Steve Schneider, that he "was not ready to die, that God wanted him to continue his work."

"Steve Schneider told him, 'You're not going to get away with this. You will go through with this. Look around you. Look around you at all you've caused,'" Col. Rawlings said. "Then we heard more gunshots."

Rawlings contradicted the government's allegation that FBI agents did not know that the Branch Davidians were determined to die in a fire, if they were assaulted a second time, to fulfill the apocalyptic prophecies of their martyrdom:

"That they didn't have reason to expect what happened, that is the worst lie of all," Col. Rawlings said. "They had warning for days that fire was a possibility. As they debriefed the individuals who did come out, they learned about suicide plans. They knew."¹⁰⁴

Rawlings was probably referring to a briefing—among others with people exiting the residence—that FBI agents received from Louis Alaniz on 17 April. Alaniz was a theological sympathizer with the Branch Davidians, who on 24 March got past the tanks and guards and entered the residence, where he received Bible studies from Koresh. A surveillance audiotape recorded a loud argument on 17 April between Alaniz and Steve Schneider. Alaniz said that he understood Koresh's teachings about the Bible's prophecies and that he had to go out and explain them to FBI agents to try to save lives. Schneider argued strenuously that no one went out without Koresh's permission, and that if Alaniz went out he would be "lost" and a "dead man" (on the Day of the Lord). Schneider argued that if Alaniz went out he would not be part of the wave sheaf. Despite Schneider's objections, Alaniz called a negotiator, asked to be picked up, and said that the agents meeting him should have a Bible and a good concordance. Alaniz told Schneider that he believed Koresh was the Lamb, but he had to explain Koresh's teachings to FBI agents to try to save lives: "I have to put an effort forward to try to save the people."¹⁰⁵

Louis Alaniz acted on his concern for the lives of the Branch Davidians, more so than the decision-making federal agents.

The details of the case remain complex and contested, with a lot of material held back or destroyed. Hopefully more primary sources of information will become available in the future.

I thank Branch Davidian survivor Clive Doyle for providing me with a collection of David Koresh's audiotaped Bible studies. I thank Ellen Kuniyuki Brown, associate director and archivist at the Texas Collection, Baylor University, for facilitating my research. I am also grateful to Lee Hancock for donating her research materials to the Loyola University New Orleans archive. I thank Clinton Wessinger for digitizing the many audiotapes I acquired. I am grateful for the many primary sources Matthew Wittmer has sent to me. I thank Ken Fawcett for his willingness to share his observations as well as his digitized videotapes and audiotapes. I am grateful to Kenneth Newport for sending me audiotapes of selected David Koresh Bible studies, Lois Roden and Steve Schneider Bible studies, as well as other tapes and audiofiles. I am appreciative of Dr. Newport's scholarship on Davidian and Branch Davidian history and theology, although we disagree about the degree of responsibility of federal agents in the deaths at Mount Carmel. I thank Marie Hagen, who served as the Justice Department's co-lead counsel in the 2000 civil trial, for the three days she spent with me in New Orleans in May 2005. I learned a great deal from her although I did not find her arguments persuasive.

This article has benefited from comments on earlier drafts by Rebecca Moore, Douglas Cowan, Stuart Wright, and Matthew Wittmer.

I am grateful to surviving Branch Davidians for interviews they have granted to me since 2004. I am keenly aware that they are likely to disagree with my conclusions in this article. I hope that they can understand that scholarship requires drawing the conclusions to which the available evidence points. I remain open to drawing other conclusions—or refining the present conclusions—as I continue to delve into the complex evidence relating to this case.

ENDNOTES

¹ "Teresa Noriega" [sic, Theresa Nobrega], "The Last Will and Testament of the Branch Davidians," <http://independence.net/waco/www.parascope.com/articles/1296/test_07.htm>, accessed 2 April 2007.

² Dan Gifford, William Gazecki, and Michael McNulty, producers, *Waco: The Rules of Engagement* (Los Angeles: Fifth Estate Productions, 1997).

³ See Eugene V. Gallagher, "'Theology Is Life and Death': David Koresh on Violence, Persecution, and the Millennium," in *Millennialism, Persecution, and Violence: Historical Cases*, ed. Catherine Wessinger (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 82–100; Eugene V. Gallagher, "Going by the Book: A Response to Stuart Wright," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 11, no. 2 (1999): 69–73; Jayne Seminare Docherty, "There Is No Cookbook for Crisis Negotiation: A Response

to Stuart Wright,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 11, no. 2 (1999): 74–82; Stuart A. Wright, “Anatomy of a Government Massacre: Abuses of Hostage-Barricade Protocols during the Waco Standoff,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 11, no. 2 (1999): 39–68; Stuart A. Wright, “A Decade after Waco: Reassessing Crisis Negotiations at Mt. Carmel in Light of New Government Disclosures,” *Nova Religio* 7, no. 2 (2003): 101–110.

⁴ Wright, “Anatomy of a Government Massacre,” 46–47; Alan A. Stone, “Report and Recommendations Concerning the Handling of Incidents Such as the Branch Davidian Standoff in Waco, Texas,” 10 November 1993, <www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/waco/stonerpt.html>.

⁵ This perspective is summarized in James T. Richardson, “Minority Religions and the Context of Violence: A Conflict/Interactionist Perspective,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 13, no. 1 (2001): 103–133.

⁶ Kenneth G. C. Newport, *The Branch Davidians of Waco: The History and Beliefs of an Apocalyptic Sect* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

⁷ Newport, *Branch Davidians*, 166; Lois Roden, “Baptism by Fire,” audiotape, 21 March 1978.

⁸ David Koresh, “Showerhead tape,” undated.

⁹ Koresh, “Showerhead tape”; David Koresh, “Dream,” audiotape, 24 April 1989; Steve Schneider, audiotaped Bible studies in Manchester, England in 1990; Newport, *Branch Davidians*, 314–16.

¹⁰ Interview with Catherine Matteson, 26 November 2004, Waco, Texas.

¹¹ For a critical analysis of the 2000 Danforth Report on the Waco case, see Jean E. Rosenfeld, “The Use of the Military at Waco: The Danforth Report in Context,” *Nova Religio* 5, no. 1 (2001): 171–85.

¹² This is by no means an exhaustive study of the surveillance and negotiation audiotapes. I obtained my copies of audiotapes from the Mark Swett Collection in the Texas Collection archive at Baylor University.

A memo by FBI negotiator Byron Sage dated 8 November 1993, subject: WACMUR, 2 (Lee Hancock Collection, Loyola University New Orleans archive) reports that eleven surveillance devices were planted by the FBI. The Swett Collection contains tapes for eleven surveillance devices, but I do not assume that these are all the audiotapes.

¹³ Stone, “Report and Recommendations.”

¹⁴ Sage, “WACMUR,” 3–4. It would be interesting to obtain the written “situation reports” of what was deemed to be the most important information gleaned from the surveillance devices.

¹⁵ David Koresh’s mother, Bonnie Haldeman (1944–2009), told of seeing stores of provisions inside the residence. The women indicated to her that the Branch Davidians were aware they were under surveillance. Bonnie Haldeman, *Memories of the Branch Davidians: The Autobiography of David Koresh’s Mother*, ed. Catherine Wessinger (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2007), 73–74.

Graeme Craddock, who survived the fire, reported that the Branch Davidians knew they were under surveillance, and had prepared to defend themselves in an assault (including reinforcing the walls below the windows with concrete to provide protection from gunfire), stocked supplies for a siege, and

expected a second assault. They believed these events would fulfill biblical prophecies. "Testimony of Graeme Craddock," United States District Court, Western District of Texas, Waco Division, Federal Grand Jury Proceedings, 20 April 1993 (Waco: Texas: Associated Court Reporters), 5–8, 29–30, 47–48.

¹⁶ A negotiation audiotape recorded Branch Davidians cheering when they heard that Koresh had devised a plan that would enable them to come out. House of Representatives, *Investigation into the Activities of Federal Law Enforcement Agencies toward the Branch Davidians*, Report 104-479 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1996), 165.

¹⁷ David Koresh, "Seven Eyes," audiotape, 4 February 1985.

¹⁸ Craddock was convicted of carrying a weapon on 28 February 1993, based on his own testimony. He received a sentence of twenty years, later reduced to fifteen. Dick J. Reavis, *Ashes of Waco: An Investigation* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 188, 299.

¹⁹ See Catherine Wessinger, "The Lee Hancock Collection: Federal and State Materials on the Branch Davidian Case," this volume, for a brief discussion of some of the pertinent FBI documents.

²⁰ For a description of the role of media, see Catherine Wessinger, "The Branch Davidians and Religion Reporting—A Ten-Year Retrospective," in *Expecting the End: Millennialism in Social and Historical Context*, ed. Kenneth G. C. Newport and Crawford Gribben (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2006), 147–72, 270–74.

²¹ This line of thought is similar to a personal communication by Lee Hancock, January 2004, that the federal agents had the greater firepower and thus had the greater responsibility to utilize that firepower responsibly.

²² Stone, "Report and Recommendations."

²³ Gifford, Gazecki, and McNulty, *Waco: The Rules of Engagement*; Reavis, *Ashes of Waco*, 31–33.

²⁴ David T. Hardy with Rex Kimball, *This Is Not an Assault: Penetrating the Web of Official Lies Regarding the Waco Incident* (Bloomington, Ind.: Xlibris, 2001), 189–96; Gifford, Gazecki, and McNulty, *Waco: The Rules of Engagement*.

²⁵ David Koresh, KRLD Interview audiotape, 28 February 1993, my transcription. Craddock testified that, from his room on the front of the building, it sounded like the shooting began outside directed toward the front door. "Testimony of Graeme Craddock," 45.

²⁶ This is the universal report of the Branch Davidian survivors as well as statements made during the siege by Branch Davidians who did not survive. In a face-to-face negotiation between Steve Schneider, Wayne Martin, Sheriff Jack Harwell, and FBI negotiator Byron Sage, Schneider mentioned how distressing it was when "a 64-year-old man drops to the floor, crying, screaming, bloody. . . ." The autopsy of Perry Jones, however, did not find a wound to the abdomen. The only wound noted was a gunshot to the inside of the mouth. "Autopsy Report of Mount Carmel Doe 80, Allegedly Peter Dale ('Perry') Jones," <www.public-action.com/SkyWriter/WacoMuseum/death/80/80_aut.html>, accessed 3 April 2007.

²⁷ Reavis, *Ashes of Waco*, 170ff.

²⁸ James D. Tabor and Eugene V. Gallagher, *Why Waco? Cults and the Battle for Religious Freedom in America* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 99; Gallagher, “Theology Is Life and Death,” 82–100.

²⁹ Koresh, KRLD Interview, my transcription.

³⁰ James D. Tabor, “The Waco Tragedy: An Autobiographical Account of One Attempt to Avert Disaster,” in *From the Ashes: Making Sense of Waco*, ed. James R. Lewis (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1994), 16–17.

³¹ Isaiah 40:10 reads, “the Lord God,” not “Christ.”

³² Koresh, KRLD Interview; David Koresh, audiotape, 2 March 1993.

³³ Newport, *Branch Davidians*, 266–69; Reavis, *Ashes of Waco*, 216.

³⁴ Craddock subsequently testified that Koresh’s Endtime prophecies included predictions the community would be attacked by tanks. “Testimony of Graeme Craddock,” 30.

³⁵ Many of the details about the events in 1993 are covered in my chapter on the Branch Davidians in Catherine Wessinger, *How the Millennium Comes Violently: From Jonestown to Heaven’s Gate* (New York: Seven Bridges Press, 2000), 56–119, available at <<http://www.loyno.edu/~wessing>>.

³⁶ Tabor, “The Waco Tragedy,” 16–20.

³⁷ Tabor and Gallagher, *Why Waco?* 4–5, 16–17; Nancy Ammerman, “Waco, Federal Law Enforcement, and Scholars of Religion,” in *Armageddon in Waco: Critical Perspectives on the Branch Davidian Conflict*, ed. Stuart A. Wright (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 282–96; Wright, “A Decade after Waco.”

³⁸ Stone, “Report and Recommendations.”

³⁹ See James Tabor, “Events at Mount Carmel: An Interpretive Log,” February 1994, available at <<http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/gopher/text/religion/koresh/Koresh%20Log>>. Spotlighting at night also prevented the Branch Davidians from using flashlights to convey Morse code signals, and the high-decibel sounds drowned out their attempts to communicate with the public using their own loudspeakers.

⁴⁰ Stone, “Report and Recommendations.”

⁴¹ Wessinger, *How the Millennium Comes Violently*, 57.

⁴² Bob Ricks, press conference statement in *Day 51: The True Story of Waco* (videotape), prod. and dir. Richard Mosley (N.p.: UTV, 1994).

⁴³ Gallagher, “Theology Is Life and Death,” 83–84.

⁴⁴ Surveillance Audiotape (SA) #65-19, 15 March 1993, my transcription. Koresh taught that Isaiah 46:11 referred to himself, because he had received his messianic calling in Israel: “Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country. . . .”

⁴⁵ “Untried Option,” audiotape, excerpts from 15 March 1993 negotiation tape 129, my transcription.

⁴⁶ Susan E. DeBusk, “[FBI] Waco Interview of Gary Noesner,” 31 August 1993, Lee Hancock Collection. Noesner coordinated the FBI negotiations with the Branch Davidians until 23 March 1993. He reports that disregarding the “Bible babble” was the negotiators’ idea, not the idea of Special-Agent-in-Charge Jeffrey Jamar. The negotiators felt they got better results when they did not engage in religious discussions with the Branch Davidians.

⁴⁷ “Discussion of Dr. Phil Arnold and Dr. Jim Tabor, KGBS Radio, Ron Engelman Show,” audiotape, 1 April 1993.

⁴⁸ Letter from Yahweh Koresh, dated 11 April 1993, Texas Collection.

⁴⁹ SA 72 #12, 13 April 1993, my transcription.

⁵⁰ The Branch Davidians had MREs (Meals Ready to Eat) during the siege. Water stored in tanks was lost when the tanks were punctured by bullets on 28 February. The Branch Davidians were drinking from a limited supply of collected rainwater. Reavis, *The Ashes of Waco*, 265–66.

⁵¹ Lorne L. Dawson, “When Prophecy Fails and Faith Persists: A Theoretical Overview,” *Nova Religio* 3, no. 1 (1999): 60–82.

⁵² “Testimony of Graeme Craddock,” 29–30.

⁵³ SA 72 #12, 13 April 1993, my transcription.

⁵⁴ SA 72 #14, 13 April 1993, my transcription. Also quoted in Newport, *Branch Davidians*, 319.

⁵⁵ Tabor and Gallagher, *Why Waco?* 49–50; Koresh, “Seven Eyes,” audiotape, 4 February 1985.

⁵⁶ Wessinger, *How the Millennium Comes Violently*, 76–77.

⁵⁷ Wessinger, *How the Millennium Comes Violently*, 106–112.

⁵⁸ My impression of this exchange is that Henry was deliberately agitating Koresh.

⁵⁹ Personal communication from Clive Doyle.

⁶⁰ SA 72 #28, 18 April 1993, my transcription. Often when Branch Davidians were talking, a tank would approach and the noise would prevent further discussions, or a sound would be employed that I call “the electronic whip.” In this instance, the electronic whip was employed.

⁶¹ Negotiation Audiotape (NA) 240E, 18 April 1993, 2:15 p.m., transcript.

⁶² NA 242, 18 April 1993, 5:42 p.m., transcript.

⁶³ NA 240E, 18 April 1993, transcript.

⁶⁴ SA 73 #4, 19 April 1993, my transcription.

⁶⁵ Hardy with Kimball, *This Is Not an Assault*, 264–66, 290; House of Representatives, *Investigation*, 68–75.

⁶⁶ Interview with Clive Doyle, 27 November 2004, Mount Carmel.

⁶⁷ Derek Lovelock, “Appendix A: A Personal View,” in Newport, *Branch Davidians*, 351–52.

⁶⁸ House of Representatives, *Investigation*, 74; Hardy with Kimball, *This Is Not an Assault*, 275–76, 285.

⁶⁹ Gifford, Gazecki, and McNulty, *Waco: The Rules of Engagement*. On 25 August 1993, Bob Ricks gave a Rotary Club speech in Tulsa, Oklahoma, in which he stated “we” gave the tank operators permission to “go into that interior concrete bunker area and insert gas into that particular chamber” (lines 265–66, transcript, in Lee Hancock Collection). He did not state that the “bunker” (the vault) was where the children and their mothers were located.

⁷⁰ Stone, “Report and Recommendations.”

⁷¹ Hardy with Kimball, *This Is Not an Assault*, 276–77.

⁷² John C. Danforth, Special Counsel, "Final Report to the Deputy Attorney General, Concerning the 1993 Confrontation at the Mt. Carmel Complex, Waco, Texas," 8 November 2000, 163–68.

⁷³ Mark Wendel's wife, Jaydean Wendel (34), had been killed in the 28 February shootout with ATF agents. Their four children had been sent out during the siege.

⁷⁴ Oral and Videotaped Deposition of Graeme Craddock, 28 October 1999, Isabel G. Andrade, et al v. Phillip J. Cojnacki, et al, United States District Court for the Western District of Texas, Waco Division, No. W-96-CA-139, 201–205; Oral and Videotaped Deposition of Graeme Craddock, 29 October 1999, Volume 2: 254, 259-64, 405.

After the fire Mark Wendel's body was found close to the bodies of Steve Schneider and David Koresh.

⁷⁵ Hardy with Kimball, *This Is Not an Assault*, 282–86; Lee Hancock, "Ex-Colonel Says FBI Heard Sect's Fire Plans," *Dallas Morning News*, 8 October 1999. Texas Ranger Captain David Byrnes told Hancock that CIA agents appeared immediately after the fire to recover surveillance devices that had been planted.

As late as 25 August 1993 Ricks told Rotary Club members that Steve Schneider shot David Koresh to prevent him from escaping the fire. Ricks did not indicate how he obtained that information (lines 205-19, transcript, Lee Hancock Collection).

Michael A. Graham, M.D., "Forensic Pathology Evaluation of the 1993 Branch Davidian Deaths and Other Pertinent Issues," appended to Danforth, "Final Report," 40-41, indicates that 37 people, including two fetuses, died inside the vault ("concrete bunker"). They consist of children 13 years and younger and mothers, plus two young men.

⁷⁶ Wessinger, *How the Millennium Comes Violently*, 80; personal communication from Clive Doyle.

⁷⁷ David Koresh, "The Seven Seals of the Book of Revelation," in Tabor and Gallagher, *Why Waco?* 189–203.

⁷⁸ This phrase comes from Stone, "Report and Recommendations," who applies it to the Branch Davidians only. I am applying it to both the Branch Davidians and the federal agents.

⁷⁹ Koresh, KRLD Interview, my transcription.

⁸⁰ SA 89B #11, 17 March 1993. This audiotope in the Mark Swett Collection in the Texas Collection is mislabeled. It is not a surveillance audiotope and should not be labeled "SA." The date appears to be correct, since in the discussions it is mentioned that it is seventeen days after the ATF raid.

⁸¹ Hardy with Kimball, *This Is Not an Assault*, 283–84; Lee Hancock, "Ex-Colonel Says FBI Heard Sect's Fire Plans."

⁸² Gifford, Gazecki, and McNulty, *Waco: The Rules of Engagement*. This documentary also depicts Bob Ricks stating in a press conference that the FBI agents expected that mothers would pick up their children and run out to remove them from the CS gas.

⁸³ Hardy with Kimball, *This Is Not an Assault*, 292–93; Aerial photos taken by the government submitted as exhibits in the 2000 civil trial.

⁸⁴ Gifford, Gazecki, and McNulty, *Waco: The Rules of Engagement*.

⁸⁵ Hardy with Kimball, *This Is Not an Assault*, 293–95. I will not attempt here to address the question of whether federal agents shot at Branch Davidians attempting to escape the burning building from the rear. No survivors exited the building from the back. I find Hardy’s treatment of the evidence in *This Is Not an Assault* very interesting.

⁸⁶ These exhibit photos from the Branch Davidian criminal trial were formerly on display in the Visitors’ Center museum maintained at Mount Carmel by Clive Doyle until he moved off the property in 2006.

⁸⁷ Terry Ganey, “Koresh Talked about Suicide a Month before Fire at Waco, Tapes Indicate,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 31 May 2000; see also Mark Swett, “The Ultimate Act of Faith? David Koresh and the Untold Story of the Branch Davidians,” 2002, unpublished paper, formerly posted on Mark Swett’s Branch Davidian Web site, now defunct.

⁸⁸ Danforth, “Final Report,” 7.

⁸⁹ Arthur J. Droge and James D. Tabor, *A Noble Death: Suicide and Martyrdom among Christians and Jews in Antiquity* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992), discusses the importance of the sign from God to indicate if an individual or a community should voluntarily seek martyrdom, in Christian, as well as in Pagan, thought systems in antiquity. See particularly the chapter entitled “The Crown of Immortality,” 129–65.

⁹⁰ The female voice that was consistently with Koresh was that of his legal wife, Rachel, suggesting that she was his partner in living out the apocalyptic events, and her role was not diminished by his other wives.

⁹¹ Danforth, “Final Report,” 11–14.

⁹² The corpses were reduced to a condition in which contested autopsies, such as that of Perry Jones, could not be confirmed or disconfirmed.

⁹³ Telephone interviews with Ken Fawcett, 30 April 2009, and 4 May 2009; video footage recorded by Channel 25 on 19 April 1993. Ken Fawcett describes how he began recording the satellite television transmissions in the introduction to his 1994 online publication, *Blind Justice*, at <www.crimesceneinterrogatory.com/?page_id=8>. Ulf Wickström, “Fire Analysis of the Events at Waco, Texas, 19 April 1993,” 32, 34–37, appended to Danforth, “Final Report,” gives explanations for the fire damage to and inside the vault (“bunker”). Fawcett and Wickström agree that a fire occurred inside the vault.

⁹⁴ Gifford, Gazecki, and McNulty, *Waco: The Rules of Engagement*.

⁹⁵ “Pyrotechnic” refers to a device operating with a spark, which can cause a fire. “Incendiary” devices are intended to start fires. Danforth, “Final Report,” 48–49.

⁹⁶ Danforth, “Final Report,” 48–64. On how the FBI initially refused to admit there were FLIR tapes recorded before 10:42 A.M. on 19 April, see Hardy with Kimball, *This Is Not an Assault*, 153.

⁹⁷ Danforth, “Final Report,” 87–90.

⁹⁸ Wessinger, *How the Millennium Comes Violently*, 56–103, 264–68.

⁹⁹ On categories of millennial groups involved in violence, see Wessinger, *How the Millennium Comes Violently*, 17–26, 264–84; and Catherine Wessinger, “The

Interacting Dynamics of Millennial Beliefs, Persecution, and Violence,” in Wessinger, *Millennialism, Persecution, and Violence*, 3–39.

¹⁰⁰ See chapter 11, “The Vise,” in Rebecca Moore, *A Sympathetic History of Jonestown: The Moore Family Involvement in Peoples Temple* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 1985).

¹⁰¹ See Catherine Wessinger, “The Problem is Totalism, Not ‘Cults’: Reflections on the Thirtieth Anniversary of Jonestown,” *Jonestown Report* 10 (October 2008), <<http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/AboutJonestown/JonestownReport/Volume10/Wessinger.htm>>.

¹⁰² Stone, “Report and Recommendations.”

¹⁰³ This was probably the same house that was used by ATF agents as their “undercover house.” When I visited Mount Carmel in October 2004, I found that this house had been demolished completely.

¹⁰⁴ Hancock, “Ex-colonel Says FBI Heard Sect’s Fire Plans.”

¹⁰⁵ SA 72 #24, 17 April 1993, my transcription.