

“The Siege of the Branch Davidians at Mount Carmel Center according to the FBI”

Catherine Wessinger
Loyola University New Orleans

Paper presented at CESNUR (Center for Studies on New Religions) conference meeting at Baylor University on June 5, 2014.

In 1993, property on the outskirts of Waco named Mount Carmel became the site of the largest loss of life in law enforcement actions in American history.

In 2003, when I spoke with Lee Hancock, a reporter with the *Dallas Morning News*, I learned that someone in the FBI had given her copies of numerous internal FBI documents relating to the Branch Davidians. The FBI had designated the incident the WACMUR, the “Waco Murder” case. This acronym was a reference to the fact that four Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms agents were killed in a shootout between the Branch Davidians and assaulting ATF agents on February 28, 1993. The FBI’s acronym does not reflect the fact that five Branch Davidians were killed as a result of the shootout, and a sixth Branch Davidian was killed by ATF agents about 5:00 p.m. as he tried to walk back to Mount Carmel. Hancock sent her many documents to me, and I placed them in the Loyola University New Orleans archive. Six years later they were relocated to the Wittliff Collections archive at Texas State University, San Marcos, so they would be available to other researchers.¹ Before the Hancock Collection left Loyola, I had pdfs made of documents that I judged to be particularly significant.

¹ “A Guide to the Lee Hancock Collection,” The Wittliff Collections, Texas State University, San Marcos, www.thewittliffcollections.txstate.edu/research/a-z/hancock.html, accessed May 19, 2014.

One of the documents is the WACMUR Major Event Log with entries dating from February 28, 1993, to May 4, 1993.² The Major Event Log is a compilation of multiple logs kept by FBI agents. The three primary logs with entries in the Major Event Log are: one kept by the FBI negotiators; one kept by members of the FBI's Hostage Rescue Team (known as the HRT); and one kept by FBI officials in the Strategic Information and Operations Center (SIOC) in the Hoover Building in Washington, D.C. The Major Event Log contains only two entries for April 19, 1993, but there is a separate WACMUR Major Case log for April 19, again consisting of entries logged by multiple FBI sources. The primary logs reflected in the WACMUR Major Case April 19, 1993 log are: the HRT; SIOC; and sounds and conversations picked up by two of the surveillance devices in the building, which were noted by FBI monitors. The April 19, 1993 log begins in the early a.m. and concludes at 10:30 p.m.³ FBI agents on the ground first spotted fire at 12:11 p.m.⁴

Several FBI narratives emerge from the internal FBI documents in the Hancock Collection. The two logs reveal that, except for notable exceptions,⁵ the narrative of the

² The last entry in the Major Event Log records the discovery of four bodies of Branch Davidians killed in the shootout on February 28, 1993, and buried during the siege in a single grave dug by Clive Doyle in the unfinished storm shelter next to the building. See Clive Doyle, with Catherine Wessinger and Matthew D. Wittmer, *A Journey to Waco: Autobiography of a Branch Davidian* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012).

³ Major Case 80-WACMUR Updated Event Log for April 19, 1993, 22:30, reports, "ATF established crime scene perimeters and assumed investigative responsibility."

⁴ FLIR (far infrared) imaging being shot by the FBI's Nightstalker airplane flying overhead recorded the first fire at 12:07 p.m. David B. Kopel, and Paul H. Blackman, *No More Wacos: What's Wrong with Federal Law Enforcement and How to Fix It* (Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1997), 198-200.

⁵ Although in the first part of the siege through March 24, when negotiation coordinator Gary Noesner was trying to keep David Koresh and Steve Schneider calm so people would be sent out, at least one negotiator approved of the punishment of the Branch Davidians by actions taken by

negotiators competed with the narratives of the HRT agents and the FBI officials associated with SIOC. The logs reveal that Special Agents in Charge, the negotiators, and HRT agents in Waco were reporting constantly to officials in SIOC. The logs indicate that SIOC officials collaborated with the lead Special Agent in Charge and the HRT agents in undercutting the negotiations and leading the process toward an assault. The Major Case Log reveals that FBI agents knew a fire was the likely outcome of an assault. As the process documented in the Major Event Log moved inexorably toward the FBI's tank and CS gas assault on April 19, 1993, negotiators were busy recording the breakthroughs they were having in persuading David Koresh to formulate and act on an exit plan. On April 19, officials in SIOC were watching and listening to the assault in real time. The SIOC officials could hear the audio picked up by bugs, as did the commanders on the ground.⁶ They were watching the assault via closed circuit television.⁷ The officials in SIOC were so well-informed about the moment to moment events during the assault, the log conveys the impression that they could have slowed or stopped the assault at any point.

the Hostage Rescue Team. After a woodpile behind the building was bulldozed and a tank hit the Branch Davidians' dump truck, the Major Event Log entry for 11:15 a.m. indicated that the negotiator who wrote, "Steve – is very frustrated," had drawn a "smile face." An entry in the log for 12:41 p.m. indicated that Judy Schneider had reported, "David is mad!! (smiley face)."

⁶ In 1999 Col. Rodney L. Rawlings, who in 1993 was the Army's on-site liaison with the FBI in Waco, told Lee Hancock that he and FBI agents listened to audio from surveillance devices in real time, and that information was used to direct tanks to insert CS in particular locations. He said that they could hear the children and women in a concrete room (a former vault) at the bottom of the central tower, "crying, talking, praying." He reported that he heard Koresh give the order to light the fire. Lee Hancock, "Ex-Colonel Says FBI Heard Sect's Fire Plans," *Dallas Morning News*, 8 October 1999.

These audiotapes, if they exist, have not been released, nor is any of this audio reported on the April 19, 1993 log.

⁷ Kopel and Blackman, *No More Wacos*.

Both the officials in SIOC and the commanders directing the assault were aware that beginning at 9:44 a.m. Branch Davidian Graeme Craddock, under the supervision of Steve Schneider at the front door, went outside the building to signal that a tank had severed the field telephone line going into the building and that the Branch Davidians wanted it fixed so they could inform the FBI about the progress David Koresh was making writing his commentary on the Seven Seals in the book of Revelation, after the completion of which Koresh would come out, according to his promise on April 14, 1993.⁸

THE ACTORS IN THE FBI

There were several Special Agents in Charge in Waco, but the primary one was Jeffrey Jamar of the San Antonio FBI office. Richard Schwein of the El Paso office was in charge of the night shift. Bob Ricks of Oklahoma City frequently served as FBI spokesman in the press briefings. The HRT commander was Assistant Special Agent in Charge Richard M. Rogers.

Gary Noesner was the FBI negotiation coordinator from March 1 until March 24, when he was taken off the case for protesting the HRT's aggressive actions toward the Branch Davidians as counteracting progress in negotiations. Noesner reports his views in his 2010 book, *Stalling for Time*.⁹ During the negotiations with the Branch Davidians carried out, first, by Lieutenant Larry Lynch of the McLennan County Sheriff's Department, and then by FBI negotiators supervised by Noesner, the Branch Davidians sent out 21 children, and a total of 14 adults came out.

⁸ WACMUR Updated Event Log for April 19, 1993, 9:44, 9:45, 9:50, 9:51, 9:53.

⁹ Gary Noesner, *Stalling for Time: My Life as an FBI Hostage Negotiator* (New York: Random House, 2010).

Clint Van Zandt was the FBI negotiation coordinator from March 25 through April 19. There is no evidence in the logs that he played a role during the April 19, 1993 assault, except to call SIOC and tell officials that the Branch Davidians wanted their phone fixed so they could communicate with FBI agents. It was never fixed. Both Noesner and Van Zandt were sent to Waco by the Special Operations and Research Unit at the FBI Academy at Quantico, Virginia.

A key negotiator was Supervisory Special Resident Agent Byron Sage from the Austin FBI office. He was not the “lead negotiator” as he is often characterized in the media.¹⁰ Sage arrived in Waco on February 28, 1993, after the shootout between the ATF agents and the Branch Davidians. He went to the McLennan County Sheriff’s Department and carried out negotiations whenever Lynch needed a break during the 24-hour 911 call,¹¹ which had been initiated by Branch Davidian Wayne Martin. After other FBI agents arrived and took over the case on March 1, 1993, Sage stayed on as a negotiator. In his book, Noesner reveals that he learned from the negotiators who stayed on the case that

Van Zandt did not get along with SAC Jamar, who cut him out of the decision-making process. Byron Sage became the de facto team leader and through the remainder of the incident played the key negotiation leadership role....¹²

¹⁰ For instance, Robert Bryce, “Agent Sage: Still Defending the FBI,” *Austin Chronicle*, November 12, 1999, www.austinchronicle.com/news/1999-11-12/74651/.

¹¹ Matthew D. Wittmer and I have listened to all of the digitized audio files of the 911 call on February 28, 1993. There was a lot of dead air time toward the end of the call, as the Branch Davidians caught a little sleep and as negotiations shifted more fully to David Koresh and Steve Schneider using another telephone. We thank Ken Fawcett for providing us with the digitized audio files.

¹² Noesner, *Stalling for Time*, 128.

When FBI officials in Washington were trying to get the approval of Attorney General Janet Reno for the assault, she wanted a status report on the negotiations. In a two-hour conversation on April 15, 1993, Sage told the Acting Associate Attorney General that negotiations were at an impasse, and there was nothing more negotiators could do to persuade Koresh to come out or send others out. He neglected to say that on the day before, April 14, Koresh had notified the FBI of his exit plan, first, through a telephone conversation with his attorney in the morning, who immediately informed the FBI agents, and then in writing in a letter. It also seems important to me that FBI agents knew that Koresh had signed a contract with his criminal attorney to represent him when he came out.¹³

The officials with SIOC who supervised the FBI agents in Waco were: Deputy Assistant Director Danny Coulson;¹⁴ Assistant Director Larry A. Potts;¹⁵ and E. Michael Kahoe, Chief of

¹³ United States Department of Justice, *Report to the Deputy Attorney General on the Events at Waco, Texas, February 28 to April 19, 1993*, October 8 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, 1993), 270-71, available at www.justice.gov/publications/waco/wacotocpg.htm. Webster Hubbell reported that Sage said that Koresh had been “disingenuous” in discussions with Sage about the Seven Seals. “He was also convinced that the FBI had not succeeded in getting anyone released from the compound through negotiation” (270). See Byron Sage’s account of the conversation with Hubbell in his congressional testimony in Joint Hearings, *Activities of Federal Law Enforcement Agencies toward the Branch Davidians (Parts 1-3)*, Part 2, Committee on the Judiciary Serial No. 72 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1996), 342-46. On p. 343, Sage states that it was his recollection that Koresh’s proposed exit plan had been received by the FBI after he had the conversation with Hubbell.

On the conveying of Koresh’s exit plan to the FBI, see Major Event Log, April 14, 1993, 11:45, 12:50, 18:45, 20:00.

Dick DeGuerin told me in a telephone conversation on May 27, 2014, that FBI agents were aware that Koresh had signed a contract retaining him as his defense attorney in March 1993. DeGuerin’s first visit inside the building was March 29, 1993. The Major Event Log shows that DeGuerin went back inside on March 30, March 31, April 1, and April 4, 1993.

¹⁴ Danny O. Coulson with Elaine Shannon, *No Heroes: Inside the FBI’s Secret Counter-terror Force* (New York: Pocket Books, 1999), 209-81.

the Violent Crimes and Major Offenders Section.¹⁶ These three officials reported to Deputy Director Floyd I. Clarke;¹⁷ and Director William S. Sessions.¹⁸ Sessions, Clarke, and Potts met with Attorney General Janet Reno on April 17, 1993 to persuade her to approve the “proposed operational plan.”¹⁹

Coulson reveals in his book that during the assault on April 19, 1993, “Reno, Clarke, Potts, and a few other big shots” were in the “small command center” at SIOC, while he stayed in SIOC’s “big room.” Reno left shortly after 10:00 a.m. to give a speech.²⁰

THE ATF ATTEMPTED DYNAMIC ENTRY

It is illegal for law enforcement agents to fire blindly into a residence.²¹ During the siege, Branch Davidians alleged to the media (until their contact was cut off) and to FBI negotiators

¹⁵ David Johnston, “Director of F.B.I. Demotes Deputy,” *New York Times*, July 15, 1995, www.nytimes.com/1995/07/15/us/director-of-fbi-demotes-deputy.html; Aaron Epstein, “FBI Official Denies Guilt in Idaho Siege,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 22, 1995, articles.philly.com/1995-09-22/news/25719516_1_fbi-sharpshooter-ruby-ridge-vicki-weaver.

¹⁶ “Ex-F.B.I. Man Sentenced in Ruby Ridge Case,” *New York Times*, October 11, 1997, www.nytimes.com/1997/10/11/us/national-news-briefs-ex-fbi-man-sentenced-in-ruby-ridge-case.html; Brendan Farrington, “(Jeb) Bush Restores Rights of FBI Agent Jailed in Ruby Ridge Probe,” Associated Press, December 12, 2002.

¹⁷ David Johnston, “No. 2 Man at F.B.I. to Quit for Job with Financier,” *New York Times*, November 25, 1993, www.nytimes.com/1993/11/25/us/no-2-man-at-fbi-to-quit-for-job-with-financier.html.

¹⁸ David Johnston, “Defiant F.B.I. Chief Removed from Job by the President,” *New York Times*, July 20, 1993, www.nytimes.com/1993/07/20/us/defiant-fbi-chief-removed-from-job-by-the-president.html; Ronald Kessler, *The Secrets of the FBI* (New York: Crown Archetype, 2011).

¹⁹ Major Event Log, April 17, 1993, 17:00, 19:00. The thick Reno Briefing File is in the Hancock Collection.

²⁰ Coulson with Shannon, *No Heroes*, 453.

²¹ The ATF’s standing orders are “to fire only at clearly identifiable targets.” Dick J. Reavis, *The Ashes of Waco: An Investigation* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1995), 142. According to

that ATF agents in the helicopters fired down through the roof of the building²² and other ATF agents fired through the windows and walls, thereby killing or mortally wounding Branch Davidians. The Branch Davidians asserted that bullet holes in the roof, walls, and front door of the building would support their allegations. Dick DeGuerin and Jack Zimmerman, the attorneys of David Koresh and Steve Schneider, reported to the press during the siege that they saw many incoming bullet holes when they went inside the building.²³ During the siege, the Branch Davidians expressed concern that the building be preserved to provide evidence supporting their allegations.

REVELATIONS IN THE FBI MAJOR EVENT LOG

Numerous details of the siege are recorded in the Major Event Log. Here I have time to mention only a few of them.

During the siege, FBI agents interviewed former Branch Davidians, Branch Davidians not at Mount Carmel, and relatives and acquaintances of the Branch Davidians. The memos reporting on these interviews are in the Hancock Collection. FBI profilers Pete Smerick and Mark C. Young wrote memos on March 5, March 7, and March 8 explaining that the Branch Davidians believed they would die in an assault by federal agents, and they therefore advised that

Kopel and Blackman, *No More Wacos*, 127n238: “federal agents are not allowed indiscriminate fire in the general direction of bad guys intermingled with noncombatants.” They report that ATF agent Roland Ballesteros stressed in congressional testimony, “no fire could be returned except at identified targets, not at windows or shadows which were sources of gunfire, not even at nonthreatening persons in mere possession of firearms.”

²² The rooms of the mothers and their children were on the second floor. Women without children were living in rooms in the two end towers on the second and third floors.

²³ “Sect’s Lawyers Dispute Gunfight Details,” *New York Times*, April 5, 1993, www.nytimes.com/1993/04/05/us/sect-s-lawyers-dispute-gunfight-details.html; “Statement of Dick DeGuerin, Attorney for David Koresh,” in Joint Hearings, *Activities of Federal Law Enforcement Agencies toward the Branch Davidians*, 2: 22-50.

the FBI not take aggressive actions that would confirm Koresh's prophecies.²⁴ On March 9, under pressure from superiors, they wrote a memo advocating "non-offensive" actions "to break the spirit of David Koresh and the control he exercises over his followers."²⁵ The Major Event Log records an entry by SIOC on March 15: "SSA Smerick supports the current tactics of cutting off the power, media access and negotiations. This has taken away the control he enjoyed earlier."

On March 20 while daylong negotiations for the exit of a number of Branch Davidians were occurring, at 9:16 p.m. SIOC logged that Jeffrey Jamar spoke with Danny Coulson in SIOC. They "agreed that we seem to get more productive results when we put pressure on the compound ie using CEV's to move material from compound area, pushing bus down the road, etc." The entry records that Coulson and Jamar "both agree that more pressure is needed."²⁶

They waited until seven adults came out on March 21 before implementing the increased pressure. At 5:54 p.m. on that day some of the Branch Davidians' vehicles were removed.²⁷ Noesner writes in his book that he confronted Jamar telling him that tactical actions were not

²⁴ Sociologist Nancy T. Ammerman apprised the Justice Department of these memos in "Report to the Justice and Treasury Departments Regarding Law Enforcement Interaction with the Branch Davidians in Waco, Texas," in *Recommendations of Experts for Improvements in Federal Law Enforcement after Waco* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, 1993), available at [Hartford Institute for Religion Research, hrr.hartsem.edu/bookshelf/ammerman_article1.html](http://hartsem.edu/bookshelf/ammerman_article1.html). See also Nancy T. 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.

²⁵ Four memos in the Hancock Collection; Lee Hancock, "FBI Mised Reno to Get Tear Gas OK, Ex-agent Alleged," *Dallas Morning News*, March 6, 2000.

²⁶ Major Event Log, March 20, 1993, 21:16.

²⁷ Major Event Log, March 21, 1993, 17:54.

conducive to gaining the Branch Davidians' trust and getting people out.²⁸ This is probably the conversation in which Noesner tried to dissuade Jamar from permitting Richard Schwein to play irritating sounds at night on the loudspeakers, which began that evening. That night Noesner's superior called and told him that he was being removed as negotiation coordinator due to the intervention of a "high-level official at FBI headquarters."²⁹

On March 25 at 6:00 a.m. Clint Van Zandt took over as negotiation coordinator.³⁰ The log indicates he reported to SIOC that the negotiators would demand that 10-20 people be out by a deadline. If the demand was not met, there would be negative consequences.³¹

The Hancock Collection contains a document dated March 27, 1993, entitled "Suicide References." The document concluded that Koresh "statistically shows a low suicide rate; more likely to arrange a 'suicide by cop' situation than to commit suicide." Two persons who were interviewed by FBI agents "felt Passover Week and Easter Weekend could be significant in a resolution."³²

On April 2 Schneider told negotiators that the Branch Davidians would come out after the conclusion of Passover. April 5 was the beginning of Passover week. FBI agents were aware of the significance of Passover for the Branch Davidians. The Hancock Collections contains an FBI document entitled "Passover Summary" dated April 1, 1993, which summarizes the findings of

²⁸ Noesner, *Stalling for Time*, 126.

²⁹ Noesner, *Stalling for Time*, 127.

³⁰ Major Event Log, March 25, 1993, 6:00.

³¹ Major Event Log, March 25, 1993, 9:05.

³² "Suicide References," March 27, 1993, Hancock Collection.

interviews conducted by agents. FBI agents learned that Koresh had often predicted that something would happen to the community during Passover.

On April 6 at 3:00 p.m. SIOC logged a call from the Army at Fort Hood, Texas concerning the FBI's request for 48 40mm illumination rounds and 36 40mm ferret (cs) rounds.³³

From April 7 until the end of the siege, HRT operators fired percussion grenades, known as flashbangs, at Branch Davidians who came out of the building. Frequently these individuals were in the courtyard where the Branch Davidians were collecting rainwater in containers.³⁴ On April 9 at 7:03 p.m., Steve Schneider was beckoned outside by one of the tank operators, and he was flashbanged.³⁵

April 9 was Good Friday. At 3:01 p.m. Steve Schneider asked for permission to go outside and light seven canisters of "incense," which would emit orange smoke. He wanted to do this between 3:00 and 4:00 p.m., the hour that Christ died. Schneider was permitted to do this across the driveway in front of the building.³⁶ That evening at 6:30 p.m. SIOC logged that an HRT agent in Waco advised an agent in SIOC "that per SAC Jamar and HRT-ASAC Rogers,

³³ Major Event Log, April 6, 1993, 15:30. "LTC Marksteiner advised that requests for such ordinance would require authorization at a higher level and might be better obtained through FBI Organic Supplies"

³⁴ Major Event Log, April 8, 1993, 2:00, 10:00.

³⁵ Major Event Log, April 9, 1993, 19:03, 19:30. During the siege, items were frequently dropped off to the Branch Davidians by agents in the tanks.

³⁶ Major Event Log, April 9, 1993, 15:01. The log reports that this was a customary practice of the Branch Davidians. Clive Doyle, personal communication, reports that he does not know of this practice, and he was unaware that Steve Schneider activated "canisters of incense" during the siege.

there would be no plan to fight a fire should one develop in the Davidian compound.”³⁷ The log contains no evidence that SIOC officials countermanded this decision.

On April 14, the day after the conclusion of Passover, Koresh and Schneider spoke by telephone with DeGuerin and Zimmerman. The attorneys then advised the FBI agents that Koresh would write his manuscript on the Seven Seals of the book of Revelation and then come out. They reported that he anticipated spending two days writing the commentary for each Seal. At 12:50 p.m. SIOC logged that Byron Sage had reported this development.³⁸

At 2:00 p.m. on April 14 negotiators logged the first discussion with Branch Davidians about wordprocessing supplies. The Branch Davidians requested typewriter ribbon cassettes for their battery-operated wordprocessor.³⁹

On April 16 Schneider called a negotiator at 1:15 a.m. to complain that a tank had rammed the building. It hit the front wall where Graeme Craddock was sleeping in a bunkbed with his head to the wall.⁴⁰ At 2:35 a.m. Koresh told a negotiator that he had finished composing his commentary on the First Seal and he was working on the Second Seal.⁴¹ At 3:40 p.m. negotiation coordinator Van Zandt gave a report to SIOC on the typewriting equipment the Branch Davidians needed to type Koresh’s manuscript.⁴²

³⁷ Major Event Log, April 9, 1993, 18:30.

³⁸ Major Event Log, April 14, 1993, 11:45, 12:50.

³⁹ Major Event Log, April 14, 1993, 14:00, 14:20.

⁴⁰ Major Event Log, April 16, 1993, 8:53, 8:59, 14:00.

⁴¹ Major Event Log, April 16, 1993, 1:15, 2:35, 3:00.

⁴² Major Event Log, April 16, 1993, 15:40.

On April 17 at 5:00 p.m. SIOC logged that Sessions, Clark, and Potts met with Reno on the “proposed operational plan.” The plan was approved by 7:00 p.m. It would be implemented on the morning of April 19, 1993.⁴³

On April 18 at 9:00 a.m. SIOC logged that Van Zandt reported that Schneider had again asked for typewriter ribbon cassettes.⁴⁴ Around 7:28 p.m. a Branch Davidian was sent outside to pick up the package, which also included milk for the children.⁴⁵

TWO FBI REPORTS: PASSOVER ANALYSIS ADDENDUM AND SUICIDE ADDENDUM, APRIL 18, 1993

Two final summaries of FBI interviews are dated April 18, 1993. These documents stress that Koresh was not likely to order a mass suicide, but he had predicted he and the community would be martyred. Van Zandt and psychiatrist Dr. Joseph Krofcheck had produced an analysis in which they described Koresh as “being fully capable of creating circumstances that could take the lives of all his followers and as many of the authorities as possible.”⁴⁶

If FBI officials thought that David Koresh was a crazy “cult leader,” why did they formulate and carry out an assault that could push him to fulfill his prophecies?⁴⁷

⁴³ Major Event Log, April 17, 1993, 17:00, 19:00.

⁴⁴ Major Event Log, April 18, 1993, 8:45, 9:00.

⁴⁵ Major Event Log, April 18, 1993, 17:32, 18:15, 19:20, 19:28, 19:40.

⁴⁶ “Suicide Addendum,” April 18, 1993.

⁴⁷ In Catherine Wessinger, “Deaths in the Fire at the Branch Davidians’ Mount Carmel: Who Bears Responsibility?” *Nova Religio* 13, no. 2 (November 2009): 26-60, I discuss the Branch Davidians’ statements about fire to fulfill prophecies that were picked by the FBI’s bugs. Branch Davidians’ statements about fire and prophecy were especially clear and urgent after Koresh had an argument with negotiator Henry Garcia at 2:00 p.m. on April 18, 1993, when Koresh called to complain about tanks clearing out the remaining Branch Davidians. This call is noted in Major Event Log, April 18, 1993, 13:45, 14:00.

EVENTS ON APRIL 19, 1993 ACCORDING TO THE WACMUR UPDATED EVENT LOG

There is a lot I could say about what the April 19, 1993 log reveals. Here I will zero in on just two entries.

Disturbingly, the beginning of the April 19, 1993 log indicates that FBI agents anticipated the possibility of a fire resulting from the tank and CS assault. At 1:25 a.m. Special Agent Robert Zane logged a notation: "M.D. specializing in pediatric burns has called offering assistance." Zane's log entry states that this physician worked at the "Galveston Burn Center."⁴⁸ I do not believe that a physician in Galveston, Texas called an FBI agent in Waco, Texas out of the blue. He must have been returning a call.

After the building was gassed from 6:00 a.m. until noon, after the building had suffered a lot of damage from tanks running through it, and after the children and their mothers in the concrete vault at the base of the tower were gassed at 11:55 a.m.,⁴⁹ the log records the first sighting of fire at 12:11 p.m. by agents on the ground. Immediately, at 12:11, SIOC began inserting statements in the log putting sole responsibility on the Branch Davidians: "Fire started at compound appears to have been started by them having torched it."⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Major Case 80-WACMUR Updated Event Log for April 19, 1993, 1:25.

⁴⁹ Major Case 80-WACMUR Updated Event Log for April 19, 1993, 11:55.

⁵⁰ Major Case 80-WACMUR Updated Event Log for April 19, 1993, 12:11. At 12:25 SIOC logged: "Fire started from a number of locations simultaneously." At 12:34 SIOC logged: "Fire trucks arrived and going right into compound." In fact the fire trucks were not permitted by Jamar to approach until 12:41, after the building had burned completely down. At 12:36 SIOC logged, "Front white side windows observed individuals lighting fires. People clearly seen lighting fires by FBI personnel in Forward TOC. Seen with binoculars."

SIOC's allegation that someone in the FTOC (the house across Double EE Ranch Road) had seen someone inside the front door of the building lighting a fire was proven false during the criminal trial. From cross-examination of the agent's description of what he saw through the front door of the Mount Carmel residence, it was determined that it was around 10:00 a.m. when

CONCLUSION

The logs, memos, and other internal FBI documents in the Lee Hancock Collection, indicate that FBI decision-makers were aware of the Branch Davidians' apocalyptic theology of martyrdom. How far up the chain of command this information was conveyed is unknown.

The Major Event Log supports the suspicion of the negotiators, expressed by Gary Noesner in his book, that the negotiations were being deliberately sabotaged. Deputy Assistant Director Danny Coulson, when he was commander of the HRT in 1985, had personally obtained positive results in a siege by keeping a low-key tactical presence and permitting creative negotiation techniques to be implemented,⁵¹ but he was the one who on March 20, 1993 gave Jamar the green light to carry out aggressive actions against the Branch Davidians to get “more productive results.”

FBI agents have expended much effort in blaming the fire solely on David Koresh and the Branch Davidians. In my view, the responsibility for the fire at Mount Carmel does not rest

he saw a man inside the foyer making a sweeping motion with his hands as if lighting a fire. But the first fire was not visible on FLIR until 12:07 p.m. Kopel and Blackman, *No More Wacos*, 200; Doyle with Wessinger and Wittmer, *A Journey to Waco*, 168-69.

⁵¹ Coulson with Shannon, *No Heroes*, 211-313; Kerry Noble, *Tabernacle of Hate: Why They Bombed Oklahoma City* (Prescott, Ont.: Voyageur Publishing, 1998); Clint Van Zandt with Daniel Paisner, *Facing Down Evil: Life on the Edge as an FBI Hostage Negotiator* (London: Penguin, 2006), 75-129.

For a cogent explanation of the reasons for the differences in the two integrated negotiation-tactical styles manifested at the Covenant, the Sword, and the Arm of the Lord in Arkansas in 1985 and with the Branch Davidians at Mount Carmel in 1993, see Stuart A. Wright, “Anatomy of a Government Massacre: Abuses of Hostage-Barricade Protocols during the Waco Standoff,” *Terrorism and Political Science* 11, no. 2 (Summer 1999): 39-68. My argument in this paper is that the decision to utilize negotiations solely to facilitate the implementation of a tactical resolution was made among the FBI officials in SIOC, rather than unilaterally by SAC Jamar and ASAC Rogers in Waco.

so much on whether or not some Branch Davidians poured fuel and lit fires,⁵² but on the fact that FBI officials knew there was fuel inside the building and that a fire was very likely, as indicated by the log entry at 1:25 a.m. on April 19, 1993 about a pediatric burn specialist standing by. FBI agents in Waco and SIOC were aware that Branch Davidians were using kerosene in Coleman lanterns, because their electricity had been turned off.⁵³ They knew a large propane tank was located behind the central tower close to the kitchen. The FBI's narrative about the fire that has been promoted to the public was constructed before it even occurred. The fire that killed 22 children, seven teenagers, and 53 adults was not a surprise to FBI officials logging the entries.

⁵² See my discussion in Wessinger, "Deaths in the Fire at the Branch Davidians' Mount Carmel."

⁵³ During the siege, HRT agents observed Branch Davidians bringing in supplies stored in the gymnasium, because they formed a line outside the building from the gymnasium's door to pass items into a window of the chapel on the east side. This is when kerosene and Coleman lanterns were brought in. Doyle with Wessinger and Wittmer, *A Journey to Waco*, 140.

Catherine Wessinger is the Rev. H. James Yamauchi, S.J. Professor of the History of Religions at Loyola University New Orleans. She has completed an oral history project that produced three Branch Davidian autobiographies (2007, 2009, 2012). She has listened to FBI negotiation audiotapes and surveillance device audiotapes available in the Mark Swett Collection in the Texas Collection at Baylor University. She reports on these in “Deaths in the Fire at the Branch Davidians’ Mount Carmel: Who Bears Responsibility?” *Nova Religio* 13, no. 2 (November 2009): 26-60. She is co-general editor of *Nova Religio*, and she is the editor of *The Oxford Handbook of Millennialism* (2011). She is the author of *How the Millennium Comes Violently: From Jonestown to Heaven’s Gate* (2000); and editor of *Millennialism, Persecution, and Violence: Historical Cases* (2000).