

## Waco back in the news SIX years after

by Michael D. Towle  
Knight-Ridder Newspapers

WASHINGTON - Six years after the flames died out in Waco, the deadly Branch Davidian standoff has reignited passions in Congress, placed Attorney General Janet Reno under new scrutiny and raised serious questions about the federal government's credibility.

At least three congressional committees are taking another look at the 51-day siege. Lawmakers are demanding Reno's resignation and the Justice Department is bowing to pressure for an independent investigation. All this after the FBI reversed years of denials and acknowledged last week that federal agents tossed incendiary devices into the compound in Waco, Texas, the day of the deadly fire.

"If the Attorney General cannot manage to find and tell the truth about a matter as important as the Waco incident, she should step aside and give someone else a chance," Sen. Phil Gramm, R-Texas, said Wednesday, adding his voice to the chorus of lawmakers demanding Reno's ouster.

Justice Department officials said Wednesday that Reno, swayed by White House officials and FBI Director Louis Freeh, is close to appointing an independent investigator to examine the FBI's use of incendiary tear gas canisters at the deadly 1993 assault. Among the nearly 80 bodies recovered from the compound were those of cult leader David Koresh and 20 children.

Reno's decision on an outside investigator is not yet final, officials at the department said, and an announcement is unlikely before Friday.

At hearings in 1993 and again in 1995, Reno and other Justice officials stressed that all forms of tear gas used against the religious sect were not incendiary. Reno testified in 1993 that she "wanted and received assurances that the gas and its means of use were not pyrotechnic."

But Reno last week acknowledged that she was "troubled" by the latest admissions, which came from a former assistant deputy FBI director with knowledge of what the FBI did that day, and she ordered an investigation.

"I am very, very upset," Reno said of the new information. "I don't think it's very good for my credibility. That's the reason I'm going to pursue it until I get to the truth."

The FBI now admits it used M-651 tear gas canisters in the assault. Weapons experts say the canisters burn for about 30 seconds as they release gas. Reno and the FBI have said agents lobbed the devices at a concrete bunker 40 yards from the Davidians' compound hours before the wooden building was engulfed in flames.

The move to end the siege by storming Mount Carmel has long been the focus of criticism from Republicans on Capitol Hill and from antigovernment groups nationwide. Lawmakers, including House Government Reform Committee Chairman Dan Burton, R-Ind., have accused Justice officials of "sitting on this evidence for six years, all the while maintaining that it didn't exist."

"I think Janet Reno owes us an explanation," said Rep. Kay Granger, R-Texas.

The three congressional committees looking into oversight hearings

are the House Judiciary Committee, the House Government Reform Committee and the Senate Judiciary Committee.

The Reform Committee has subpoenaed the Texas Rangers, who are compiling a report on what evidence they hold pertaining to the compound. It also has subpoenaed the assistant U.S. attorney in Waco for "all information relating to the use of pyrotechnic CS tear gas used in the Waco standoff," according to a spokesman for the panel.

Burton, whose committee is expected to hold hearings in the fall, said the panel was also issuing subpoenas to the White House, the FBI and the CIA to evaluate their involvement.

The panel also will probe any connections between the Pentagon and the raid. Investigators want additional information on training sessions ATF agents requested and received from U.S. Special Forces soldiers.

Neither the House or Senate judiciary committee has said when it will hold hearings, but it's believed they will schedule them soon.

Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, said he, too, is starting an inquiry. Reno and other leaders at Justice, he said, don't "have much credibility at this particular point."

The House Judiciary Committee is expected to provide the most fireworks. It is made up of some of the most partisan members of Congress on both sides of the aisle. The committee was the scene of heated exchanges among lawmakers when it considered impeachment proceedings against President Clinton.

The politically charged tenor of the renewed Waco debate has even reminded one Republican, Rep. Henry Hyde, R-Ill., chairman of House Judiciary, of the confrontational hearings of 1995. He said this week that he would support consolidating the three panels into one investigative body, a move that might rile ranking GOP members on the other committees.

Not every Republican believes congressional probes are necessary. Rep. Joe Barton, R-Texas, who has differed on numerous occasions with the Clinton White House, said he is not sure what purpose the hearings would serve.

"I'm not real certain what bringing it back up accomplishes," said Barton, whose district does not include Waco. "I think you should always know the truth and federal officials should always be accountable for their actions, but other than putting in place procedures to prevent it from happening again I'm not sure what else we can do."

Moreover, Reno is in a dispute with the Texas Department of Public Safety, which oversees the Texas Rangers, over evidence from the standoff. A federal judge ruled last month that he would take control of the 24,000 pounds of evidence after the Texas agency complained that public access to the information was limited.

A 19-page motion filed Tuesday by Justice Department lawyers contends that U.S. District Judge Walter Smith has no legal basis for his order demanding custody of all documents and other evidence.

## Remnants of Dennis continue to cause problems

by Steve Stone  
Knight-Ridder Newspapers

NORFOLK, Va. - If a region could grumble, Hampton Roads would shout at Dennis: "Enough already!"

The storm formerly known as Dennis lost its star billing as a tropical system Monday, but still struck a nasty note, pouring up to 10 inches of rain on interior Virginia. And, after giving Hampton Roads a break on Sunday, its wide mantle of clouds again swept over the area, stealing the holiday sun just as Virginia Beach reopened the water to swimming and surfing.

In Hampton, hundreds of people whose apartments were wrecked when a tornado spun off by Dennis hit on Saturday, were still seeking answers on what to do Monday.

Some aid may come from Washington. "I have declared a major disaster in the commonwealth of Virginia," President Clinton announced Monday, "to help the state and local recovery efforts." His announcement, making tornado victims eligible for federal assistance, came during a speech in Norfolk.

The tornado, which caused an estimated \$7.2 million in damage, remains the primary impact of Dennis on the state.

"We haven't had any major flooding," Janet L. Clements, a spokeswoman for the Virginia Department of Emergency Services in Richmond, said Monday.

While Clinton declared the entire state a disaster area, "people who are outside of Hampton aren't really eligible to apply" for aid, Clements said. "But it should be a big help for those people who don't have a place to stay."

Tornado victims can begin applying this morning for help with:

- Temporary housing.
- Obtaining low-interest loans to cover uninsured losses, both for individuals and businesses.
- Obtaining federal grants for home repairs and other disaster-related needs.

Federal Emergency Management Agency personnel, who arrived from Philadelphia Monday night, will work with state officials.

FEMA offers a "Teleregistration Line" to handle requests for assistance. To apply, call toll free: 1-800-462-9029 (TTY: 1-800-462-7585) and register.

The remnants of Dennis were just southwest of Charlottesville, Va. at 7 p.m. Monday, moving north-northeast at 12 mph, with maximum sustained winds of only 10 mph.

"Further acceleration ... is expected as Dennis gets caught up in some strong

flow ahead of a cold front," said Bruce Terry, a senior forecaster at the National Hydrometeorological Prediction Center in Camp Springs, Md.

Dennis ambled through North Carolina over the weekend, passing into Virginia on Monday.

Overnight, it passed north of Greensboro, N.C. By sunrise, it was near Martinsville, Va. Though its sustained winds were down to a meager 15 mph, it was still able to muster an occasional hurricane-strength burst.

At 7:44 a.m., a 75-mph gust whipped along Interstate 40 in Castle Hayne, N.C., north of Wilmington. It moved a railroad car down some tracks a short distance.

"Its good side is, we are getting some much-needed rainfall here," said Kim Perez, a meteorologist at The Weather Channel in Atlanta.

Dennis has been a potent rain machine, and shows no sign of drying out. Flash-flood watches were posted as far north as Connecticut.

The National Hurricane Center in Miami is tracking several systems in the Atlantic Basin:

-At 5 p.m., Tropical Depression 7 was just inland, about 35 miles east of Ciudad Victoria, Mexico. It was drifting west-northwest with maximum sustained winds near 35 mph.

-A westward-moving tropical wave was about midway between Africa and the Lesser Antilles. It became a little better organized Monday and "has some potential for further development over the next day or two," specialist Miles

*"I have declared a major disaster in the commonwealth of Virginia."*

-President Clinton

Lawrence said.

-Another tropical wave was moving west through the Lesser Antilles, but conditions are unfavorable for it to develop into a tropical storm.

## ESPN still growing after 20 years

by Cecil Conley  
Knight-Ridder Newspapers

Chris Berman could have left ESPN in 1986. He was in the running for the sports anchor job at KGO (Channel 7) and also had talked with then-Giants owner Bob Lurie about replacing Hank Greenwald as the radio voice of the team.

The job at KGO offered much more money than Berman was making at the time. And calling games for the Giants, his favorite major-league baseball team, had been a lifelong dream. Berman says while both jobs were appealing, he opted to stay at ESPN because he believed the sports cable network was on the verge of something big.

And he was right. When ESPN landed the rights to Sunday night NFL games in 1987, Berman said he knew for the first time that the network was going to survive one way or another.

"I gave a one-minute speech leading into our first preseason game (Chicago at Miami) and gave a little thank you to all our fans -- 'This is as much for you as it is for us. You've helped us get to this point,'" Berman recalled. "As I spun in my chair and threw (the telecast) to Mike Patrick and company down at Joe Robbie Stadium (now Pro Player Stadium), I knew we were here for good."

"I knew at that point we were ready for lift-off."

ESPN actually blasted off as the first all-sports cable network 20 years ago on Tuesday and will celebrate with a three-hour special at 4 p.m. Berman, who hosts the show, admits he still is somewhat surprised that ESPN has become a household acronym.

"If you think back to 1979 and 1980, sports on TV was just what the networks allowed you to see on the weekends. Think of what TV was. Everybody had antennas. What was cable TV?" he said. "In sports in particular, ESPN was the booster rocket for sports on every day, games on every night and sports information on all day and certainly all night. It has exploded sports and its availability to

everyone."

"They laughed at us -- 24 hours a day sports? Now if you don't have five stations where you have a choice to watch something of sports 24 hours a day, you feel inadequate."

nament in 1980 that first gave the network legitimacy.

Before that, ESPN televised oddball sports such as darts and go-kart races because it didn't have anything else. After ESPN made its debut on Sept.

kids from Iowa yelled at us, "Hey, ESPN! That had never, ever happened," Lee recalled. "It's no accident that our network and the tournament both took off during the '80s. They both happened together. It was

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-Chris Berman, ESPN sports' broadcaster

With the appetite of viewers in mind, ESPN has continued to expand. There are now six cable channels in the ESPN empire along with a radio network, Web site, magazine and even a chain of restaurants. ESPN debuts two new channels on Tuesday -- the pay-per-view ESPN Extra and ESPN Now, a viewer's guide to sporting events on all networks.

When asked whether it's possible that ESPN will one day become too much of a good thing, Berman said there's cause for concern despite the network's popularity.

"We are one of the best things that ever happened to college basketball, and I hope we're not one of the worst. In that sport in particular, maybe there's a little too much on too often and maybe the games don't seem as special anymore," Berman said. "I don't think we have endangered it yet, but we've pushed the limit. I think we'll know from the viewers, as we always have, when enough is enough. I think we're at the bursting point, but I also thought that eight years ago."

While Berman said he knew ESPN was here to stay when it added NFL telecasts in 1987, it was ESPN's coverage of the NCAA basketball tour-

7, 1979, with its first "SportsCenter" show, it televised its first live event -- a game between the Kentucky Bourbons and Milwaukee Schlitzes in the Professional Slo-Pitch Softball World Series.

Berman, who joined ESPN in October 1979, recalled being assigned to do play-by-play for a darts tournament.

"Most of the guys were Irish or British, and I actually saw guys' hands shaking. They couldn't get their practice throws in," Berman said. "They took a couple of belts of something dark, like Wild Turkey. It was 9 o'clock in the morning and they were already having a few pops. Then all of the sudden, boom, boom, boom. Their hands were like steel."

It was a humbling beginning for Berman, who was 24 at the time. "You tell people you work for ESPN and you tell them it's a cable station, and people didn't know what cable television was, let alone us," he said. "People would say, 'ESPN? Oh yeah, the Spanish station.'"

ESPN anchor Bob Ley said fans began to recognize the cable network in 1980, when it televised 23 games in the NCAA Tournament.

"We were at the Final Four and three

the exact same curve."

Dick Vitale has been part of ESPN's college basketball team from the start. "To see the growth of ESPN by the type of response when we arrive at an arena, the way they treat us. It has been unbelievable," he said. "I am a little biased, but I really see the growth of college basketball, the way it has exploded over the last 20 years, because of what started by having ESPN in '79."

"Prior to having ESPN in 1979, the only games we would ever get on television were North Carolina, Kentucky or an Indiana on the networks -- the major programs. Now every conference and every school that plays Division I, if they have any kind of program, are going to get national TV exposure."

That translates to 76 million homes. When ESPN launched in 1979, it only had 1.4 million subscribers.

"If you consider 10 years ago at our 10th anniversary, we were only one network," Ley said. "Who knew 10 years ago we would be what we are today?"

## Washington post/ABC news poll: issues 2000

The Washington Post

How important will each of the following be to you in deciding how to vote in the next presidential election in the year 2000: very important, somewhat important, important, not too important or not important at all? (Shown: Percentage who said "very important.")

- Improving education and the schools, 79 percent
- Handling the national economy, 74 percent
- Managing the federal budget, 74 percent
- Handling crime, 71 percent
- Protecting the Social Security system, 68 percent
- Encouraging high moral standards & values, 67 percent
- Protecting patients' rights in the health care system, 65 percent
- Protecting the Medicare system, 64 percent
- Protecting the environment, 62 percent
- Upholding the dignity of the presidency, 62 percent
- Helping the middle class, 61 percent
- Handling the issue of gun control, 56 percent
- Handling foreign affairs, 54 percent
- Cutting taxes, 44 percent
- Reforming election campaign finance laws, 30 percent

ABC News poll is based on random telephone interviews with 1,526 adults between Aug. 30 and Sept. 2. The overall margin of er-

*Managing the Federal Budget, 74 percent*

*Handling crimes, 71 percent*

ror is plus or minus 3 percentage points. Sampling error is, however, only one source of error in this or any other public opinion poll. Interviewing was conducted by TNS Intersearch of Horsham, Pa.