

FBI blasts Waco compound with chants

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WACO— The FBI, frustrated by the trickle of people out of the Branch Davidian compound, has stepped up its sonic assault on the heavily armed cult, playing Tibetan religious chants into the early morning Monday.

Although nine people left the compound from Friday to Sunday afternoon, FBI special agent Bob Ricks said more had been expected.

"We were pretty much led to believe we had a substantial number coming out as a prelude to ending this situation," Ricks said. "We were somewhat disappointed."

Authorities have said up to 30 cult members are interested in leaving the Branch Davidians' rural fortress just outside of Waco. Koresh, who has held authorities at bay for 23 days, remained holed up Monday with 96 of his followers, including 17 children and several women he claims as his wives.

Ricks said agents stopped broadcasts into the compound on the Davidians' Sabbath Saturday because "they said they were going to start taking very positive action to end this matter in a matter of days," Ricks said.

But late Sunday and early Monday authorities returned to the broadcasts of taped negotiations between Koresh and FBI agents and the religious chants.

"One person was recommending we play Achy Breaky Heart continuously," Ricks joked, alluding to a popular country music song.

Meanwhile Monday, cult members who left the compound over the weekend appeared

before a federal magistrate. They are being held as material witnesses to the Feb. 28 shootout that erupted after agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms attempted to serve an arrest warrant for Koresh and search for illegal weapons at the compound.

U.S. Magistrate Dennis Green appointed attorneys for the cult members and set their detention hearings for Wednesday or Thursday.

One of the nine people released over the weekend, Victorine Hollingsworth, 59, did not appear in court due to hospitalization for a

away," said Ofelia Santoyo, 62.

"You all are asking the wrong questions, you need to be asking the FBI and the ATF some questions," said Rita Riddle, 35.

The other cult members appearing Monday were: James Lawter, 70; Sheila Martin, 46; Annetta Richards, 64; Brad Branch, 34; and Kevin Whitecliff, 31.

Ricks noted that Koresh is keeping his able-bodied followers with him, releasing mostly older cult members who likely would not pose a threat of violence. Five of the seven cult members turned over on Sunday have an average age of 64.

"The elderly and those people, if there were in fact another breakout of hostilities, those people would probably not be involved," Ricks said.

"We were hoping to perhaps see a turn around with the release of the children and release of those people who are of younger type age who would pose a threat to us.

"We are still continuing to take defensive measures because we believe the nucleus of control and power within that compound remains."

FBI agents said they hoped for a breakthrough in negotiations when Mrs. Martin was released Sunday.

She is the wife of Wayne Martin, a Harvard-educated lawyer who is considered one of Koresh's top confidants inside the compound.

"For Mr. Martin to let his wife come out... we thought they were sending us a signal that this is something preliminary to a major event taking place," Ricks said. "That did not occur."

"One person was recommending we play Achy Breaky Heart continuously."

—Bob Ricks, FBI special agent referring to the broadcasts of taped negotiations between Koresh and FBI being played over loud speakers

heart condition. She was in stable condition Monday, according to a spokesman at Hillcrest Baptist Medical Center.

The eight members appeared before Green in orange jail jumpsuits, with their feet and one hand shackled. Most were calm and polite, and even joked with reporters.

As they were being led from the courtroom, three cult members made brief responses to reporters' questions.

"We're not a cult. We read the Bible," said Gladys Ottman, 67. "They took our Bibles

House to hear Perot's views on NAFTA trade agreement

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Fresh from his return to prime-time television and with his popularity ratings thriving, Ross Perot will appear before a House committee this week to discuss the proposed free trade agreement with Mexico.

From the Dallas billionaire's comments during the presidential campaign, it's unlikely he'll give a ringing endorsement of the North American Free Trade Agreement.

Perot's most-quoted pronouncement to date on the NAFTA came during his presidential debate last October in Richmond, Va., when he said the treaty could result in a "giant sucking sound" of American jobs going to Mexico.

"So, if the people send me to Washington, the first thing I'll do is study that 2,000-page agreement and make sure it's a two-way street," Perot said then.

The plain-spoken tycoon didn't make it to the White House. But his 19 percent of the election returns — the best showing by an independent since Theodore Roosevelt's 27 percent in 1912 — has given him clout that Congress is unwilling to ignore.

The chairman of the House Small Business Committee has asked Perot to appear Wednesday before his committee to discuss the proposed agreement's likely effect on small businesses throughout the country.

"I think it's extremely important we hear from a businessman on this," said Rep.

John LaFalce, D-N.Y., who has expressed fears that small business may be most disadvantaged by the treaty.

"Most of the big-business community has opined in favor of this, but the big-business community has been primarily concerned, I think, about their bottom line," LaFalce said. "If they can make more profits by creating plants and jobs in Mexico... that works to their advantage. But from the perspective of the American public and the American worker, I'm not convinced it is in our best interest."

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, with a membership dominated by small businesses, says its members are poised to reap the benefits of free trade. In testimony last year before LaFalce's committee, chamber Vice President Willard Workman said the trade pact "will make it substantially easier for U.S. small businesses, and indeed U.S. business generally, to export to Mexico, our third-largest and most rapidly growing export market."

A wide array of labor, consumer and environmental groups have denounced the treaty, contending that it would harm the environment and cause U.S. jobs to flee south.

LaFalce reserved judgment about the ongoing negotiations over side agreements to protect the environment, workers' rights and guard against import surges.

"Certainly, I think they can mitigate some of the harm, but I'm not sure they can mitigate all the harm," he said.

LaFalce said asking Perot to testify isn't an effort to woo the Texan's supporters, who are being courted by both the Democrats and Republicans.

Dallas minister awaits trial for wife's murder

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SAN ANTONIO— Looking relaxed and confident, deposed Dallas minister Walker Railey said Monday he's ready to answer charges that he tried to kill his wife in 1987.

"I've had six years to wait," Railey, 45, told reporters. "I'm ready for the trial."

Prospective jurors filled out questionnaires while attorneys debated a flurry of defense motions in a prelude to actual jury selection and the start of testimony, set for Wednesday.

The short, balding defendant is on trial for the April 21, 1987, attack on his wife Peggy, then 38, who was choked and left for

dead at the couple's home in a Dallas suburb.

Although she survived, the victim remains in a "persistent vegetative state" from which doctors say she will never recover.

If convicted, Railey faces up to 20 years in prison and a \$10,000 fine.

Railey was senior minister at the First United Methodist Church in 1987 and insists he was gathering research at libraries on the Southern Methodist University campus the night his wife was attacked.

"I have been confident of my innocence all along, and I'm no less confident now," Railey said after his arraignment in Dallas last summer.

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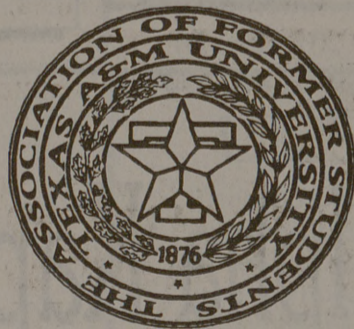
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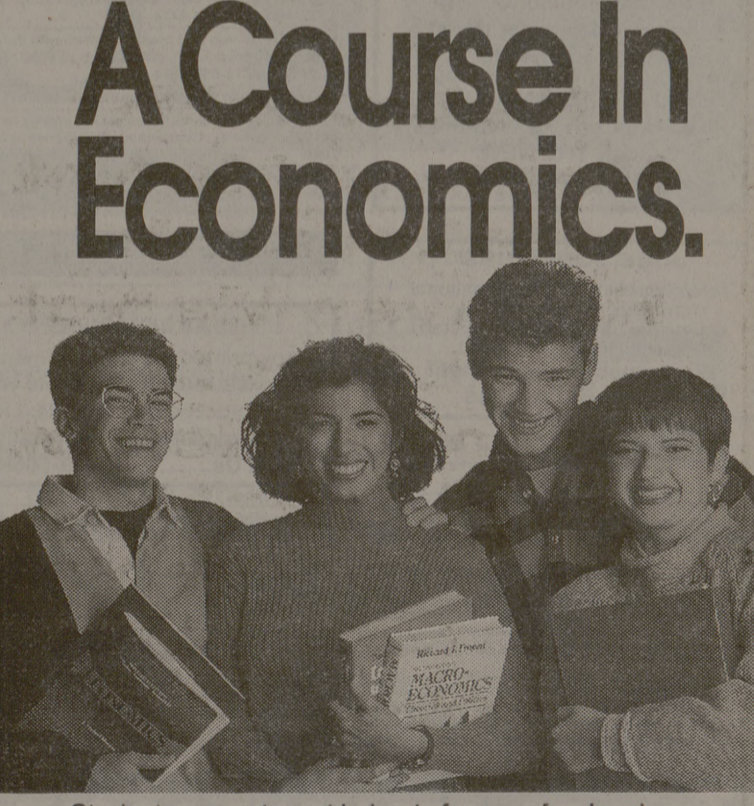
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