

NATION

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Battalion

Reno offers Danforth position as head of Waco investigation

WASHINGTON (AP) — Attorney General Reno has offered former Republican John Danforth the job of heading an independent inquiry into the government's use of force at the fiery end of the Branch Davidian standoff in Waco, government sources said yesterday.

The sources, who spoke only on condition of anonymity, told the Associated Press yesterday the Justice Department was in final negotiations over the details of the independent inquiry and an announcement could come as early as today.

Danforth, 63, would bring solid Republican credentials as well as a background in law enforcement. Before entering the U.S. Senate, he served as attorney general in Missouri for eight years. He retired from the U.S. Senate in January.

He is an Episcopal priest, and both admirers and detractors have noted his emphasis on morals as well as his stubborn independence. Final touches were being put on the scope and nature of the investigation, said the sources, who include Republicans on Capitol Hill who had discussions yesterday with Justice Department officials.

Reno's decision comes as congressional Republicans have increased pressure on her and on FBI Director Louis Freeh to explain how ev-

idence, including a videotape, about the siege was withheld from the public for years.

The GOP wants to know whether the FBI lied about the use of incendiary tear gas canisters during the final raid on the compound. More than 80 sect members died, some of them children.

"[Danforth] calls them like he sees them. Members of the Senate or House will have full faith in his findings."

— U.S. Sen. Thomas Eagleton
D - Miss.

No evidence has been uncovered by any of the committees probing the raid that the government was responsible for starting the fire, according to several aides familiar with the investigations.

Several GOP-led committees in Congress have begun re-investigating the Waco matter.

At issue are recent revelations by the FBI that it fired several flammable tear gas canisters at a storm shelter hours before the main

Branch Davidian building went up in flames. The FBI and the Justice Department had previously denied use of any incendiary devices, and investigations will focus on whether this misinformation was the result of a bureaucratic slip-up or a coverup.

The Justice Department has insisted there is no change in conclusions that it was David Koresh and his followers who started the fatal fire. The department also stresses that military special operations officers were on the scene only as observers and advisers and not in any illegal capacity as participants in the operation.

Republicans have used the revelations to attack the credibility of Reno and the Justice Department. The White House has stood behind Reno, but President Clinton has declined to give a similar vote of confidence to Freeh.

Democrats on Capitol Hill have asked the GOP to let the independent investigation sought by Reno occur before any congressional hearings.

Those who know Danforth said he would bring instant credibility to the investigation.

"He calls them like he sees them," former Sen. Thomas Eagleton, a Missouri Democrat who served 10 years with Danforth, said. "Members of the Senate or House will have full faith in his finding."

Troopers indicted in shooting

TRENTON, N.J. (AP) — Two state troopers were indicted on attempted murder charges yesterday for shooting three minority men on the New Jersey Turnpike — one of a series of cases that have stirred a nationwide debate over racial profiling by police.

John Hogan, 29, and James Kenna, 28, could get up to 30 years in prison if convicted on the state charges.

The troopers are accused of firing 11 shots into a van containing four young men on their way to a basketball tryout in North Carolina in 1998. Two African-American men and a Hispanic man were wounded, and they have filed civil

rights and injury lawsuits against the troopers and the state.

Hogan and Kenna said they stopped the van because the driver was speeding and opened fire because it appeared the van was backing up to them.

The shooting triggered protests and internal investigations that embroiled the New Jersey State Police in the controversy over racial profiling, or the practice of stopping motorists on the basis of race.

Earlier this year, Gov. Christie Whitman fired the State Police superintendent after he said minorities were responsible for most of the state's cocaine and marijuana traffic. In June, President Clinton issued

an executive order calling on federal law enforcement agencies to collect race and gender data in all stops and arrests.

Police in several places, including North Carolina, Houston, San Diego and San Jose, Calif., have taken similar measures.

In April, Hogan and Kenna were indicted on charges of falsifying traffic-stop reports to conceal the fact they were stopping a lot of African-American drivers.

The following day, the attorney general's office issued a report confirming that traffic stop-and-search patterns provided evidence of racially discriminatory practices by the State Police.

Eighth grader uses stun gun on classmate

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — An eighth grade boy shoved an electric stun gun into a classmate's chest and triggered it on yesterday, then ran away, authorities said.

A counselor at Hoover Middle School apprehended the 14-year-old suspect after witnesses and the 11-year-old victim identified him.

The boy suffered two welts on the chest. He was treated by paramedics and sent home.

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