

Reno names choice in Waco review

WASHINGTON (AP) — Attorney General Janet Reno has selected former Republican Sen. Danforth to head an independent review of the 1993 standoff with the Branch Davidians.



RENO

The appointment today, government officials said yesterday, Reno's move came as the top Republican in the Senate said he now has doubts about who started the siege that ended the fatal siege in Waco and believes it is time for the attorney general to step down. Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott said new revelations that the government withheld evidence about its use of force in the raid add a "pattern" of refusing to cooperate with congressional requests. "All of that leads me to conclude that the attorney general should resign," Lott said.

Lott said belated revelations that the Branch Davidians fired incendiary devices at the Waco compound has left him with doubts about who started the siege that ended the fatal siege and killed members of the sect.

The government continues to maintain the fire was started by sect members and not federal agents. "There are doubts because questions have been raised," Lott told reporters.

Reno, nonetheless, moved forward with her plans to launch an independent inquiry headed by Danforth, who left the Senate in 1994 and is respected by members of both parties.

Reno selected Danforth, who has a background in law enforcement as a former attorney general of Missouri, and he accepted the offer, according to government officials, who spoke only on condition of anonymity.

A senior Justice Department of-

Rangers find flares in ruins

DALLAS (AP) — Texas Rangers searching tons of evidence recovered from the charred rubble of the Branch Davidian compound near Waco found several spent illumination flares, *The Dallas Morning News* reported yesterday. The newspaper said the Rangers discovered a star parachute flare while sifting through a storage center Friday for missing pyrotechnic tear gas grenades.

Evidence logs showed more incendiary flares were recovered in the weeks following the FBI siege and assault on April 19, 1993, James B. Francis Jr., head of the Texas Department of Public Safety told the newspaper.

"These flares are potentially a very important issue, inasmuch as the government had enormous spotlights trained on the compound throughout the standoff," Francis said. "They didn't need

these flares to light the compound. One or more was fired. For what purpose or reason would these rounds be used?"

John Collingwood, an FBI spokesperson, told *The Morning News* he could not flatly rule out the agency's use of illumination rounds during the deadly siege but said they played no part in the final assault.

"Several times during the standoff, they had people sneaking in or out of the compound at night. Whether they ever used them then, I don't know," said Collingwood. "But I can say categorically, we did not use illumination rounds on the 19th."

David Koresh and about 80 followers died in the fire and assault at the compound following the 51-day siege. The government has maintained the Branch Davidians deliberately set the fires.

official said Reno would announce the appointment at her weekly news conference today.

As Republicans continued their assault, the attorney general received a strong endorsement from Senate Democratic Leader Tom Daschle. He said Reno "deserves commendation rather than criticism," and that "under no circumstances" should she resign.

Danforth did not return a call to his office in St. Louis seeking comment.

His independent probe could clash with multiple hearings that Republicans in Capitol Hill were preparing even before Congress returned yesterday from its August recess. One lawmaker deferred to Danforth, however.

House Judiciary Committee Chairman Henry Hyde said yesterday he would withhold his planned legislation to establish a five-member commission to first see if Dan-

forth gets the full cooperation of the Justice Department.

"Should events prove otherwise, we will reconsider this decision," Hyde, R-Ill., said. Meanwhile, Hyde's panel will examine the agency's structure during hearings as soon as this fall on Justice Department programs, according to a GOP official close to the panel.

House Government Reform and Oversight Committee Chairman Dan Burton, R-Ind., has issued subpoenas in his own re-examination of the tragedy, Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, also plans hearings.

While senators of both parties expressed their respect for Danforth's integrity, some warned that the multiple committee probes could hamper his inquiry.

"They'd begin to get in the way of Sen. Danforth unless they fed into" that inquiry, Sen. Bob Kerrey, D-Neb., said.

Program aims to collect delinquent students' loans

AUSTIN (AP) — The federal government launched a campaign yesterday to collect on \$24 billion in unpaid student loans.

Austin and Baltimore were chosen by the U.S. Department of Education and Treasury as test cities for the campaign. Department officials said they want to increase awareness about the responsibility to pay back student loans.

The cities were chosen for the pilot program because of the number of people with student loans and the high number of college-educated adults living there.

Since 1966, the federal government has loaned over \$300 billion to help Americans finance higher education through government student loans, David Lebyrk, deputy assistant secretary for fiscal operations and policy at the Treasury Department said.

"We want to ensure that future students are afforded the same opportunities, and this new campaign will help us achieve that goal," he said.

The \$24 billion worth of loans in default represents

about 14 percent of all student loans. Of those in default, Austin residents have 26,000 delinquent accounts worth about \$128 million. Baltimore residents have 88,000 active accounts in default for \$294 million, the department said.

People need to know they are responsible for paying off the debt, Greg Woods, chief operating officer of the Office of Student Financial Assistance said.

"Repaying your student loan benefits you, and future generations are ensured access to these kinds of loans," Woods said.

Former students should remember that repaying student loans keeps their credit rating in good standing, Milton Wright, president and chief executive officer of Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Corporation said.

"The best way to avoid defaulting and to maintain good credit is to seek help as early as possible if you have difficulty maintaining your student loan repayment arrangement," Wright said.

The new campaign will include television and radio spots.

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