

FBI playing mind games on cultists: Unleashes tactics aimed at speedy end to siege

By MARC R. MASFERRER Tribune-Herald staff writer
Mar 16, 1993

WEATHER Partly cloudy
High: 75 Low: 50s
Details, map/2A

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FBI playing mind games on cultists

Unleashes tactics aimed at speedy end to siege

By MARC R. MASFERRER
Tribune-Herald staff writer

Their patience with the besieged Branch Davidians apparently wearing thin, the FBI has launched a series of tough, psychological warfare-type measures to quickly end to the standoff.

Authorities, said FBI spokesman Richard Swensen, cut off power on Friday to Mount Carmel and, on Sunday night, shined powerful lights at the fortified compound. They also are trying to steer clear of the lengthy biblically based exchanges that marked most of the negotiations during the first two weeks of the siege.

"Frankly, we're not here to be converted. We're here to try and get this resolved peacefully. We've made it clear that we want to talk about substantive issues," Swensen said during the daily briefing Monday on the 17-day-old crisis.

Swensen denied that talks had been broken off by either side.

"If there's a reason, we'll contact them," he said. "We just wanted to move off the dime and start getting something accomplished."

Hundreds of federal agents and more than 100 Branch Davidians, led by Vernon Howell, have been locked in a standoff since February 28 after a shootout that left four Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms agents and at least two cult members dead.

Nobody has permanently left the compound since Friday.

Late Monday afternoon, television pictures showed two people leaving the cult's compound. They returned about an hour later.

FBI spokesman Al Cruz said authorities were aware of the report, but declined to either confirm or deny it. He did say there had not been a new release of people from the compound.

Swensen said negotiators were looking for a "very positive sign" from cult members that they are ready to end the standoff.

"The best proof of that, he said, would be 'obviously, for them to walk out of there. Short of that,



Texas Department of Public Safety officials man a checkpoint near a makeshift sign at FM 2491 and Loop 340 suggesting paths away from Mount Carmel.

Blizzard's death toll now at 171

24 hikers still missing in Appalachians; 48 mariners may be lost at sea

By ROGER PETERSON
The Associated Press

Rescuers failed to find 24 hikers missing in the snowy southern Appalachians on Monday after dozens of others trudged through deep drifts to safety. Highway crews strained to reach thousands snowbound at home and in shelters by the weekend blizzard, and the death toll rose to 171.

In addition to the deaths — reported from Cuba to Canada — 22 crewmen were missing after a freighter sank Monday off Nova Scotia, and 16 mariners were missing in waters around Florida.

Most major airports moved back toward normal operations. But because of delays in the East, "Normal won't be here until Tuesday or Wednesday," said Mary Francis Fagan of American Airlines at Chicago's O'Hare Airport.

Commuters in big cities across the nation struggled to get to work.

Many Pennsylvania businesses, schools, courthouses and offices remained closed Monday. Hundreds of thousands of customers still had no electricity, leaving many without heat while temperatures were in the single digits and lower. During the height of the storm Saturday, more than 3 million homes were

blacked out.

A deep freeze that followed the storm was estimated to have caused millions of dollars in damage to Southern crops. From potatoes to tobacco, blueberries to peaches, Florida growers rushed to harvest a large crop of oranges.

Insurance companies reported a blizzard of claims for damaged buildings and business losses. A.M. Best Co., the insurance industry rating agency, estimated that insured damages would be upward of \$800 million.

Teams from North Carolina and Tennessee searched the mountains of Great Smoky Mountains National Park for remaining members of a group of 117 teen-agers and adults from a Detroit-area private school who had been hiking on an annual spring break trek when the storm struck. But the search for 21 students and three adults still missing was called off at nightfall.

Among the 93 accounted for, one faculty leader was in stable condition at a hospital, while the seven to nine members of his group were being examined, said officials at the Cranbrook-Kingwood Upper Middle School in Bloomfield Hills, Mich.

One group of 30 students emerged from the woods as scheduled Monday afternoon, school spokesman Ray Carson said. "They had no idea there was a problem," he said.

All of them had wilderness survival training," Carson said.

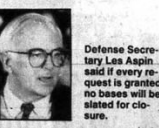
Aspin: Resist pleas for bases

Closure commission set up to insulate Congress from angry constituents

By ERIC SCHMITT
The New York Times

WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Les Aspin, signaling his support for closing more military bases than he recommended last week, Monday urged a presidential commission to resist efforts by lawmakers and local communities to spare their installations.

"Almost all bases that are going to be appealed to you will have a story to tell and a case to be made," Aspin said at the first hearing of the 1993 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission, which will make



Defense Secretary Les Aspin said if every request is granted, no bases will be slated for closure.

submit its final recommendations to President Clinton by July 1. Clinton, and then Congress, would have to approve or reject the entire package.

Aspin last week recommended shutting 31 large military installations and shrinking or consolidating 134 other depots and smaller sites. Aspin said that once the Pentagon spent \$1.7 billion to clean up and close those installations, it expected to save \$3.1 billion a year starting in the year 2000.

This round of proposed closings, which has provoked an uproar among lawmakers whose districts would lose bases and thousands of military and civilian jobs, goes no further than bringing the number of installations

Frosty nights ravage local peach crops

Early estimates put losses between 20% and total ruin

By BRIAN ANSNETT
Tribune-Herald city editor

Two weekend freezes caught Central Texas peach trees in full bloom and killed hopes for a fourth straight good crop, area growers said Monday.

Estimates of damage range from a low of 20 percent at one Waco orchard to total losses at some in Freestone County.

That means far fewer fresh peaches for sale at roadside stands this summer and a good bit less money in circulation, especially in Freestone County, where peaches brought in more than \$3.5 million in 1992.

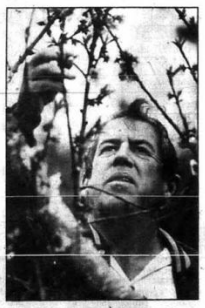
Growers say they're just guessing at the damage now and can't be certain until they examine their trees for telltale signs that won't show up for several days.

Gary James of Brazos Valley Orchards said he thinks the freezes killed at least a fourth or fifth of the crop on his 5,000 trees.

"We won't know for sure for another week, but they're partially gone, especially the earlier-blooming varieties," James said.

The peaches probably would have been just fine if the official temperatures, taken at Waco Regional Airport, were accurate for the entire area. The official lows for the weekend were 10 degrees on Saturday morning and 28 on Sunday.

Peach trees in bloom usually don't suffer



Donald James looks over some peach blossoms at Brazos Valley Orchards, where severe damage until temperatures drop to 48 degrees or below and stay there for four or five hours, according to Texas A&M University horticulturists. That means the official lows this weekend weren't cold enough to hurt peach trees.

Senate OKs death for child murders

Bill sent to House with unanimous support; Richards vows to sign

By PAULINE ARRILAGA
The Associated Press

AUSTIN — The Texas Senate passed a measure Monday that would make murder of a child under the age of 9 punishable by death.

The bill by state Sen. J.E. (Buster) Brown, R-Lake Jackson, passed unanimously and was sent to the House for consideration.

"We're going to make sure that the little children who can't run or hide or call for help are protected," Brown

said. "If someone takes their life intentionally, then they're going to face the most severe punishment, and that's the death penalty."

State Sen. Gonzalo Barrientos, who has opposed the death penalty in certain cases, voted in favor of the measure, saying it is worth it if the bill saves one child.

"I believe that the hottest places in hell are reserved for killers of children, and I believe we should help send them there when they do that," said Barrientos, D-Austin.

Similar bills have previously failed in the Legislature, over concerns that women who have abortions could be charged with murder. However,

Brown said his measure is worded to include only the murder of a child who is "born and alive."

Gov. Ann Richards, who supports abortion rights, said she plans to sign the measure into law if it passes the Legislature.

"I've been told that all of the concerns that I had about that bill just being a ruse for an abortion bill are cleared up, and I'm sure I'll sign the bill," she said.

State Rep. Susan Combs, R-Austin, the House sponsor of Brown's bill, said she feels confident the bill will be approved in that chamber, too.

Children learn to eat right by watching how their parents eat — Wednesday in Food

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aimed at a quick end to the standoff.

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The Associated Press and Los Angeles Times contributed to this story.