

FBI, ATF Reportedly Received Threats Of Punishment For Waco

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In the last several months the FBI and the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms received an increasing number of threats that their Oklahoma City offices would be punished for the bloody final raid two years ago on the Branch Davidian cult in Waco, Texas, according to a former top FBI official.

Some of the threats were directed specifically at Robert Ricks, the FBI special agent in charge in Oklahoma City. Ricks represented the agency at Waco in frequent television interviews and was probably the most visible federal official during the 51-day siege of the cult compound that started with the shooting deaths of four federal agents on a weapons raid and wound up with the fiery deaths of 81 adult and juvenile cult members on April 19, 1993.

Ricks "is taking the threats seriously," said Oliver "Buck" Revell, who supervised the Oklahoma City FBI office as special agent in charge of the Dallas office until he retired last August. Even though he is the agent in charge here, Ricks has kept out of the public eye.

"There have been threats against the ATF and FBI in Oklahoma City several times," said Oklahoma native Revell, the deputy director of the FBI during most of the 1980s. "There has been a buildup in the last few months," he added in a telephone interview from his home in Plano, Texas, near Dallas.

Revell said he thought the threats were linked to the role of the two agencies at Waco, where the Oklahoma City ATF office, "almost in its entirety," he said, was deployed for the siege.

FBI and ATF spokesmen would not confirm Revell's account. But his information reflects a growing conviction among federal officials that retaliation for the Waco raid was what motivated last week's bombing, which the FBI attributes to Timothy J. McVeigh and unknown confederates.

The bombing here took place on the second anniversary of the fiery conclusion in Waco. While federal agents from many other jurisdictions were involved in the siege and raid, Ricks' presence here apparently drew attention to Oklahoma City.

Concern for the safety of federal officials investigating the blast is extraordinarily high. An army of federal agents and officials is working on the case behind a cordon of armed police and soldiers in an area off-limits to the press.

Justice Department spokesman Carl Stern would not even identify the top officials from Washington who had been sent to aid the investigation in Oklahoma City. "We

do have some officials out there. But we're not disclosing their identity because of security. We just had one incident out there, and we don't want another," he said.

The FBI was reluctant to discuss Revell's assertions. FBI spokesman Michael Kortan, who has been temporarily assigned here from Washington, said he had no information about any threats to the Oklahoma City office before the blast, and said he did not want to discuss possible threats directed at Ricks.

"He (Ricks) has not commented on this," said Kortan, reiterating that there had been one threat to the FBI office here just after the blast last week.

Washington-based ATF spokesman Larry Scott, who is temporarily in Oklahoma City, said of the threats, after checking with a locally based agent, "We are not aware of any recently."

But in a television interview Tuesday, former ATF Deputy Director Phil McGuire said that "Waco has been a rallying cry" for extremists who have literally declared war on the agency, which enforces collection of alcohol and tobacco taxes and the 1968 Gun Control Act and a related Explosives Control Act.

No ATF personnel were killed in the blast here, although four people were hospitalized with injuries. And the FBI office is nine miles away from the blast site at 50 Penn Place, an office complex. The two agencies belong to different parts of the federal government -- the FBI under the Justice Department and the ATF part of the Treasury Department.

"They probably thought the FBI was in that building," said Revell, referring to the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building. He said the Oklahoma offices of both agencies were "closely tied" to the Waco raid in the minds of extremists.

Representatives of the Michigan Militia, one of the largest of a number of private armed groups around the country with an anti-government agenda and a center of the FBI investigation of the blast, were in this area in the last 60 to 90 days trying to organize militia support, Oklahoma County District Attorney Bob Macy said in an interview.

The FBI complaint issued when McVeigh was charged with the bombing last week said he had been identified as "particularly agitated by the conduct of the federal government at Waco" and "had been so agitated about it" that he "personally visited the site."

When he was arrested driving through Perry, Okla., less than two hours after the blast, McVeigh had correspondence in his car that "threatened retribution" against the FBI and ATF for their role at Waco, the Dallas Morning News has reported, attributing the information to a law enforcement official.