

FBI Official Censured for '92 Idaho Shooting Gets No. 2 Post

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WASHINGTON—The veteran official who has directed the Oklahoma City bombing investigation—but who was censured recently for his role in a controversial shootout with separatists in Idaho—was named the FBI's second-ranking official Tuesday.

Announcing the promotion of Larry A. Potts, 47, to deputy FBI director at an unrelated White House briefing, Atty. Gen. Janet Reno noted that FBI Director Louis J. Freeh has described Potts as "the very best the FBI has," and praised his work in Oklahoma City. She made no mention of his April 5 censure.

Freeh, in a separate statement, said that Potts, a 21-year FBI veteran, "is completely dedicated to the rule of law."

But Sen. Larry E. Craig (R-Ida.), who has led Capitol Hill interest in the 1992 Idaho shootout, which resulted in the killing of a white separatist's wife by an FBI sharpshooter, said he was "very disappointed" by Reno's action.

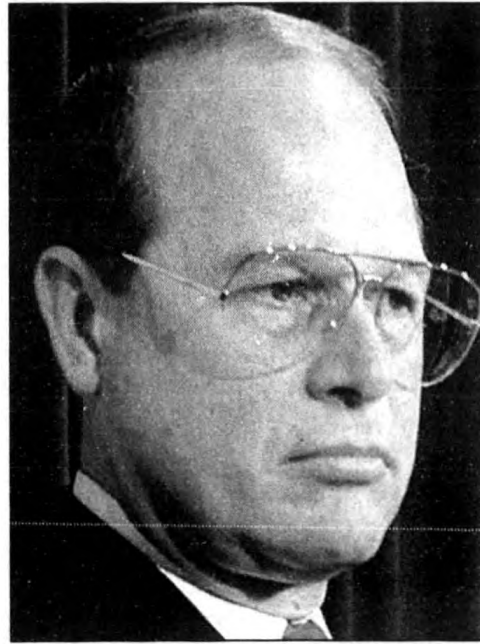
Craig said that Potts' promotion was not "appropriate" or "prudent" when there is "a high level of emotion" surrounding the interaction of citizens and law enforcement.

Samuel Sherwood, director of the U.S. Militia Assn. in Blackfoot, Ida., said that Reno's approval, which was required for Potts' appointment, was "terribly immature and insensitive."

Citing fears of militia members that the government is conspiring against them, Sherwood said: "If people feel those things, then she just confirmed their worst nightmares."

The shootout at Ruby Ridge, Ida., began with the Aug. 21, 1992, killing of Deputy U.S. Marshal William Degan, who was preparing to arrest separatist Randy C. Weaver on weapons charges and the death in the same shootout of Weaver's 14-year-old son, Sammy.

An FBI sharpshooter from the elite Hostage Rescue Team subsequently wounded Weaver and his friend, Kevin L. Haris, and shot and accidentally killed Weaver's wife, Vicki, who was standing behind a cabin's



Associated Press

Larry A. Potts, pictured in 1992

open door, holding her 10-month-old baby.

At issue in subsequent investigations of the shooting were the amended "rules of engagement" for the siege. According to those rules, deadly force "could and should" be used against any armed adult in the open. The bureau's standard deadly force policy permits it to be used only in self-defense or the defense of others.

Freeh recommended that Potts, who was overseeing the siege from FBI headquarters in Washington, receive a letter of censure for failing to supervise the rules of engagement properly.

Deputy Atty. Gen. Jamie S. Gorelick approved the punishment of Potts, saying that he "did not adequately follow through to ensure that his intent with regard to the rules of engagement was properly reflected in the final rules."

Freeh named Potts to be acting deputy director last December. The two men's professional relationship dates back to 1990 when Potts served as inspector-in-charge of a multi-agency task force investigating the mail-bomb murders of federal appellate Judge Robert Vance of Birmingham, Ala., and civil rights attorney Robert Robinson of Savannah, Ga.

Freeh, then a federal prosecutor in New York, headed the investigation and prosecution in that case, which resulted in the conviction of Walter Leroy Moody.

"It is because Larry Potts has such great skills that I placed him in personal charge of the FBI's priority investigation into the bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City," Freeh said Tuesday.

"He has been in the command center at FBI headquarters in Washington every day since the bombing, directing all aspects of our investigation. He is the very best the FBI has."