

Star Tribune

WEDNESDAY/May 3/1995

NEWSPAPER OF THE TWIN CITIES

FBI promotes leader of bombing probe despite censure involving Idaho siege

Associated Press

Washington, D.C.

The agent who directed the bombing investigation in Oklahoma City was promoted Tuesday to deputy FBI director despite his recent censure for poor management of a 1992 Idaho siege that left three dead.

Larry Potts' promotion to the FBI's No. 2 position was announced less than a month after he received a written Justice Department reprimand for "management omissions" during the fatal standoff with white separatist Randy Weaver.

The decision by Attorney General Janet Reno to promote Potts was immediately criticized by the head of a militia organization as confirming

the "worst nightmares" of disaffected Americans that their government is above the law. The Oklahoma bombing has focused widespread attention on private military groups whose leaders have been accused by critics of encouraging violence by using virulent anti-government rhetoric. Two men being held as material witnesses once tried to join a militia in Michigan.

Reno announced at the White House that she had accepted FBI Director Louis Freeh's recommendation that Potts be made deputy director, a position he has held in an acting capacity since December.

But Sen. Larry Craig, R-Idaho, who has called for Senate hearings into the siege, said he was "very disap-

pointed" by Reno's decision. "Her action was certainly not appropriate to the time and did not also fit with what I think was the prudent thing to do for the sake of the reputation" of the FBI, he said.

Samuel Sherwood, director of the U.S. Militia Association in Blackfoot, Idaho, and Gerry Spence, Weaver's lawyers, said Potts' promotion would only fan fears among Americans in the militia movement who believe the government is conspiring against them.

Spence, who successfully defended Weaver against a charge of murdering a deputy marshal during the siege, said Reno had missed "a very good opportunity to restore people's confidence in the FBI."