

# Deputy FBI director demoted over Idaho controversy

## Freeh removes No. 2 official as debate over Weaver siege in 1992 continues

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WASHINGTON — Under pressure from Congress, FBI Director Louis J. Freeh removed his friend Larry Potts as the bureau's No. 2 official Friday because of growing controversy over Potts' role in a deadly 1992 FBI siege at Ruby

Ridge, Idaho.

That public debate, fanned by a continuing Justice Department investigation and impending congressional hearings, had left Potts "unable to effectively perform his duties as deputy director," Freeh said.

Freeh acted just before two House subcommittees open joint hearings next Wednesday into another deadly FBI siege, in 1993 at the Branch Davidian cult compound near Waco. Both the Idaho and Waco incidents were managed from FBI headquarters by Potts while he was an assistant director of the FBI.

Freeh had pushed for Potts' promotion to deputy director at the same January news conference at which he called for Potts to be censured for failing to pay enough attention to the orders given to FBI snipers in Idaho.

"Freeh did the right thing" by demoting Potts to the FBI's training division, said Rep. Charles Schumer of New York, ranking Democrat on the crime subcommittee holding the Waco hearings. "Larry Potts' removal takes a sword away from those who believe that Waco and Ruby Ridge were a grand government conspiracy."

Freeh's demotion of Potts, however, failed to defuse calls for congressional hearings on the Idaho siege.

Sen. Arlen Specter, R-Pa., chairman of the Senate Judiciary subcommittee on terrorism, called Friday for hearings on the Idaho episode "as soon as possible," saying they are needed because of clouds he said are hanging over the FBI and the Justice Department.

The demotion of Potts came only two days after it was disclosed that a ranking FBI official had admitted destroying a document describing the Idaho action

against armed white separatist Randy Weaver, a siege that left Weaver's wife dead. She was shot by an FBI sniper.

The destroyed document dealt in part with whether Potts, before the unarmed woman was killed, had approved changes to the "rules of engagement" allowing agents more freedom to fire their weapons.

The official who admitted destroying the document, Michael Kahoe, was placed on leave Tuesday from his post as special agent in charge of the FBI's Jacksonville, Fla., office.

Potts has denied approving the

change in the rules of engagement, but two other FBI officials, who received heavier punishment, have sworn that he did, sources close to the investigation said. One of the two officials, Eugene Glenn — whose role in the Idaho siege led to his removal as special agent in charge of the FBI's Salt Lake City office — complained that the investigation was a cover-up. His complaint has prompted the Justice Department's office of professional responsibility to reopen its investigation.

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