

FBI Deputy Chief is Agent Who Led Bombing Case - Weldon L. Kennedy Replaces Larry Potts, After Questions About The 1992 Siege in Idaho

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WASHINGTON - An FBI agent praised for leading the Oklahoma City bombing investigation and quelling a hostage drama involving Cuban prisoners became the agency's new No. 2 man Tuesday.

FBI Director Louis J. Freeh named Weldon L. Kennedy deputy director, saying he "is superbly qualified" after 32 years of service and because of his "outstanding FBI performance and dedication."

Kennedy, who has worked in bureaus from Las Vegas to Newark, N.J., said he's pleased to take the high-profile job in Washington, but he'll miss the day-to-day life of an agent.

"Being an agent in charge of a field office in the FBI is the best there is, a plum job," Kennedy said in a telephone interview.

"You are in charge. Here you're part of the staff."

Kennedy replaces Larry Potts, a longtime friend of Freeh who was demoted July 14 to an unspecified post at the FBI training academy at Quantico, Va.

Freeh had promoted Potts to deputy director in May but removed him because of questions about his role in overseeing the deadly 1992 FBI siege involving white supremacist Randy Weaver in Idaho.

Kennedy, 56, most recently has headed the bureau's Phoenix office.

But after a bomb destroyed the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City on April 19, killing 168 persons, Freeh put him in charge of that case.

He led the investigation that resulted in the quick arrest of two suspects - Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols.

Kennedy will continue to supervise the Oklahoma City case. He refused to discuss it as a Friday deadline looms for filing indictments.

Caption: Photo