Cult Frees Two More Children; Standoff Continues

By J. Michael Kennedy and Richard A. Serrano

WACO, TEXAS

As the siege of Mount Carmel entered its fifth day Thursday, two more children were released to authorities in what has become a pattern that officials hope could eventually leave only adults inside the surrounded compound.

And more questions arose about the Sunday morning assault on the religious complex. One eyewitness said federal agents suddenly launched their raid after being told that David Koresh and his Branch Davidians followers had been tipped off to their plans.

That account conflicts with earlier statements from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms that agents seeking illegal weapons in the cult compound only learned of the tip-off after the raid. The ATF has said the tip, made in a telephone call to the cult, eliminated the element of surprise in a gun battle that killed four agents and wounded 15 others.

Since the battle, Koresh has refused to leave his fortified escarpment, dubbed Mount Carmel. He has told federal negotiators that he is awaiting instructions from God.

Federal agents said Thursday that Koresh had released two more children from the compound. Anthony Jones, 14, and his 11-year-old brother, Kevin Jones, bringing to 20 the number of children from the cult that Waco officials are now placing in foster homes.

Jeffrey Jarai, the FBI agent in charge of the siege, also said officials found and removed the body of a white male lying about 350 yards to the rear of the peach-colored compound. The unidentified male had been shot, presumably during a brief firefight that followed the larg-er Sunday morning gun battle.

Jarai said the dead man had a "semiautomatic pistol clipped in his hand.

The new developments mean that the sealed-off complex now contains 18 children, 47 women and 43 men. Koresh appears to be releasing about one child a day, a situation that clearly is pleasing federal officials. None of the young-sters who have been released is Koresh's own.

Jarai noted that while the adults are refusing to surrender, the children still inside the compound are in a dangerous situation tantamount to being held against their will.

"This is not a classic kidnap-ping," Jarai said. "I would say these are hostage-like circum-

stances.

He said life on the 77-acre fortress appears to be returning to some normalcy, despite the lengthy statements. He said agents can see people drawing water from wells, people going to outside showers, and women and children being sep-

arated from the male members of the cult.

He said the held-up members also have a "substantial number" of military-like meals that are "ready to eat."

"It's quite a complex," he said. "They have stores of all kinds of food. They are very, very self-suffi-
cient."

Telephone negotiations continue between the authorities and Koresh, the cult leader, who reigned Tues-

day on a promise to surrender. Authorities say he often speaks on the phone in long, rambling discus-
sions about God and the Bible. Nev-

evertheless, officials remain hopeful.

"He is still saying he's going to come out, but only when he gets a mes-

cue to do so from God," Jarai said.

Meanwhile, concerns about the AFT handling of the Sunday con-

frontation continued to mount.

An eyewitness to the staging area for the raid said the agents were casually preparing to move in on the Mount Carmel complex when one of the federal officials started shouting.

"He yelled it," said the witness. "He said, 'We gonna move. He's been tipped off. He's nervous and he's reading his Bible and he's shaking.'"

"They just grabbed their gear and left," the witness said.

The witnesses, who requested anonymity, said the federal agents getting ready for the raid appeared relaxed.

"They were talking and joking around," the witnesses said. "I don't think they thought it was going to be that bad at all."

Wednesday, Dan Hartnett, an associate ATF director out of Wash-

ington, said his agency did not know the surprise raid had been compromised until the agents arrived and then later learned of the telephone call.

But Thursday, Dan Conroy, a deputy associate ATF director from Washington, repeatedly refused to discuss details of the telephone tip, except to say the ATF and the Texas Rangers are investigating the matter.

"That is very aggressively being pursued," Conroy said. "That is being investigated in its totality."

White House Rejects AMA Request to Be Part of Task Force

By Marilyn Milloy

WASHINGTON

The White House Thursday rejected a request by the American Medical Association for a greater role in the rat-and-holes shaping of a plan to overhaul the nation's health care system, saying the group's voice already was "signifi-
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The Association, in a letter recently and with other Clinton associa-
tion leaders about being left out of the process. In the letter, AMA President James S. Todd 

warned that any reform "will fail without the support of the profes-
sion."

But he was careful in an interview Thursday not to appear to issue an ultimatum.

In fact, leaders of the influential group feel they have been "in the larg- er recently and with other Clinton officials during the campaign and through the transition, said White House press secretary Dee Dee Myers. And "town meetings" are being planned in which their partici-

pation has been sought.

Because of a White House conflict-of-interest policy, AMA members, like those affiliated with other interest groups, have been barred from attending meetings of the task force's 30 "working groups." So have the medical number of experts the group said it was "expes-
tive" to bring in.

Still, Todd insisted that the group would maintain what has been an increasingly cordial tone about the need for reform gen-

eral. Still, Todd insists that the group would maintain what has been an increasingly cordial tone about the need for reform gen-

erally, and specifically about its sup-
port for universal coverage and some elements of "managed compe-
tition" — the theoretical, market-

based model of health care reform embraced by the president.

In past years, the AMA has been among the most recalcitrant groups on the issue of reform of health care financing. But no more. In the letter, for instance, Todd reiterated the parts of the Clinton plan they would embrace, and noted that the associa-
tion would support some sort of national "spending goals" — but, significantly, not spending limits, as Clinton has suggested, that could result in regulating or capping doc-

tor's fees. "Any kind of price con-

traints we're against," said Todd.

Still, said Todd, "We do not want to be confrontational. It's not for us. We're just saying, 'Here are several propositions, now let's deal with them — together.'"

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