Branch Davidians: FBI Letters and Negotiation Transcripts Collection.

Inclusive: 1993

Summary Information

Creator
Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1908- [These materials became accessible through the Freedom of Information Act.]

Language
English

Media
Compact disk (CD)

Abstract
This collection contains copies of letters written to the FBI during and after the Branch Davidian siege as well as transcripts of negotiations between the Branch Davidians and the FBI.

Subjects

Administrative Information

Restrictions on Access and Use
All requests for copying of materials must be submitted to The Texas Collection in writing. Please use the Request Form for Copying Materials sheet. Unpublished materials authored or otherwise produced by the creator (s) of this collection are in the public domain. There are no restrictions on use. Copyright status for other collection materials is unknown. Transcription of reproduction of materials protected by U.S. Copyright Law (Title 17, U.S.C.) beyond what allowed by fair use requires the written permission of the copyright owners. Works not in the public domain cannot be commercially exploited without permission of the copyright owners. Responsibility for any use rests exclusively with the user.

Preferred Citation
When quoting material from this collection, the preferred citation is:

[Waco] Branch Davidians: FBI Letters and Negotiation Transcripts, Accession #3849, Box #, Folder #, The Texas Collection, Baylor University.

Processing Information

Scope and Content
The collection consists of three compact discs containing PDF files. The first disc contains copies of letters sent to and from the FBI during and after the siege of 1993. American citizens wrote to the FBI offering advice, venting their frustrations, or praising the agency for their efforts. The other two discs contain transcriptions of audio cassettes recorded during the siege itself.

Administrative/Biographical History
The religious sect known as the Davidians was the product of a reform movement within the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. Problems began when a group of Adventists, led by Bulgarian immigrant Victor Houteff, started to challenge the traditional hierarchy of the denomination. Houteff claimed to have received personal revelations from God and published his controversial views in a book entitled The Shepherd's Rod (1932). Houteff and his followers, the Davidians, believed that the spiritual gift of prophecy was necessary for effective leadership so that King David's earthly kingdom could be re-established on earth prior to the second coming of Jesus Christ. After the leaders of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church excommunicated his sect, Houteff moved to Waco, Texas, and continued to preach until his death in 1955.

Upon Houteff's death, the Davidians splintered into competing groups. Benjamin Roden and his wife Lois commanded one such faction, calling themselves the Branch Davidians. For over two decades, the Rodens led the Branch Davidians without significant opposition. The 1980s, however, brought about division. A newcomer named Vernon Howell had joined the Branch in 1981. Three years later, a schism occurred within the group, with Howell leading his followers to a new site in Palestine, Texas. Through a series of confrontations between Howell and George Roden, the son of Ben and Lois Roden, control of the Branch Davidians' headquarters in Waco passed to Howell who legally changed his name to David Koresh in 1990. Rumors concerning polygamy, abuse, and arms dealing within the Branch Davidian group aroused the suspicions of the federal government. Thus, federal agencies such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives began to monitor the group.

In response to a stockpiling of illegal weapons, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives secured a search warrant for the investigation of the Branch Davidians' compound near Waco, Texas. From February 28th until April 19th, 1993, Branch Davidians under the leadership of David Koresh resisted federal agents' attempts to storm their Mount Carmel Center. The fifty-day siege ended when the compound erupted in flames, killing David Koresh and most of his followers. This collection was donated by Andy Segal, a Senior Producer at CNN, in 2010 Dec.

Related Resources

Related records in other Archive collections

Related citations
"Local Man Offers Insight into Waco." Religion News Report vol. 4, no. 223 (July 4, 2000).

Use/Reproduction Restrictions: The collection is open for research.
Archival Arrangement
Prior to processing, the compact discs that constitute the collection were already named and numbered; this organization has been maintained.

There is only one series in this collection: I. Audio/Visual Materials.

Series 1: Audio / Visual Materials. 1993

Administrative/Biographical History
This series contains three compact discs. The first, entitled "Waco Letters," contains copies of letters sent to and from the FBI during and after the siege at Mount Carmel. The other two compact discs contain transcripts of the negotiations that occurred during the siege of 1993.

Item List
Box 1. Folder 1. Compact Disc: "Waco Letters", 1993
Box 1. Folder 2. Compact Disc: "Waco Negotiations" (1 of 2), 1993
Box 1. Folder 3. Compact Disc: "Waco Negotiations" (2 of 2), 1993