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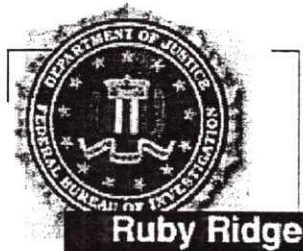


FBI official charged with obstruction after concealing Ruby Ridge report

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WASHINGTON (CNN) -- The FBI admits making serious mistakes at its 1992 siege of Randy Weaver's mountain cabin at Ruby Ridge, Idaho. But federal authorities say E. Michael Kahoe -- a high-ranking bureau manager -- broke the law.



Ruby Ridge



Kahoe

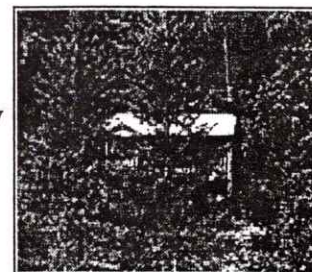
(CNN)

Kahoe, former chief of the Violent Crimes and Major Offenders Section at FBI headquarters in Washington, D.C., was charged Tuesday with obstruction of justice for concealing a bureau critique of the siege, making it appear as though the report never existed.

The charge carries a penalty of up to 10 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

The federal complaint, known as a felony information, says Kahoe concealed and destroyed an FBI headquarters document "that was sought by prosecutors in preparation for the murder trial pertaining to the Ruby Ridge incident."

According to the U.S. Attorney's Office in Washington, Kahoe was ordered to prepare an "after-action critique" of the FBI's conduct at Ruby Ridge. During the incident, Deputy U.S. Marshal William Degan was killed, as were Weaver's wife Vicki and son Samuel.



Weaver's home on Ruby Ridge
(Courtesy KXLY)

Kahoe organized and moderated a

conference on the Ruby Ridge matter at FBI headquarters in November 1992, and ordered that a report be prepared. But when federal prosecutors in Idaho asked the FBI for materials pertaining to the incident, Kahoe and certain unnamed superiors at FBI headquarters resisted the request, the U.S. Attorney's Office said.



Weaver

(CNN/file)

existed."

In order to ensure that the report would not be made available, Kahoe "withheld the critique from the documents to be delivered" to prosecutors, the U.S. Attorney's Office alleged, and "ordered a subordinate FBI headquarters official to destroy all copies of the critique and to make it appear as if the critique never

Officials familiar with criminal procedures say the prosecutor's decision to file a criminal information rather than seek a grand jury indictment could indicate Stiles intends to seek a plea agreement from Kahoe, in exchange for testimony against other FBI agents charged.

When indications of an FBI cover-up first surfaced last year, Director Louis Freeh suspended six top officials, including Kahoe, who has since been on administrative leave with full pay.

Then-Assistant FBI Director Larry Potts, whom Freeh had just promoted to be his deputy, was also suspended.



Potts

(CNN)

Their dismissal was followed by angry congressional hearings on Ruby Ridge and the FBI siege at David Koresh's Branch Davidian compound near Waco, Texas.

The public outcry led to big changes. Now the FBI emphasizes negotiations before confrontation. The peaceful end to the Montana Freeman standoff in June was a product of this new policy.

The big question now is whether other senior FBI officials, including Potts and his deputy Danny Coulson, will be charged in the alleged cover-up. Indications are Kahoe may cut a deal with prosecutors investigating Potts and others. Kahoe is expected to appear in a Washington courtroom within days.

Correspondent Terry Frieden contributed to this report.

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