



## U.S. Department of Justice

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco,  
Firearms and Explosives

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[www.atf.gov](http://www.atf.gov)

September 29, 2021

REFER TO: 2021-1016

VIA Email: [john@greenewald.com](mailto:john@greenewald.com)

Dear Mr. Greenewald:

This responds to your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request dated August 3, 2021, and received by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) on the same day, in which you requested records concerning Lessons Learned from the Raid of the Waco Branch Davidian Compound in Waco, TX February 1993, PowerPoint presentation.

In response to your request, we have processed a total of 147 pages of responsive material.

We are withholding third party information, including the names of ATF employees, under FOIA Exemption (b)(6). To disclose personal information about a living individual to a member of the public, we need the written consent from the persons whose information you requested. Without written consent, proof of death, or an overriding public interest, personal information is exempt from disclosure under the FOIA. The FOIA does not require agencies to disclose information that would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of the personal privacy of third parties (5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(6)).

We are withholding the specific law enforcement techniques and procedures used in our investigation pursuant to Exemption (b)(7)(E) of the FOIA. Exemption (b)(7)(E) exempts from mandatory disclosure records or information compiled for law enforcement purposes when production of such records or information “would disclose techniques and procedures for law enforcement investigations or prosecutions, or would disclose guidelines for law enforcement investigations or prosecutions if such disclosure could reasonably be expected to risk circumvention of the law” (5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(7)(E)). The information withheld reveals specific law enforcement procedures and techniques used in this investigation. Disclosure of such information could enable individuals outside of the agency to circumvent agency functions and gain access to sensitive investigative information.

For your information, Congress excluded three discrete categories of law enforcement and national security records from the requirements of the FOIA. *See* 5 U.S.C. § 552(c). This response is limited to those records that are subject to the requirements of the FOIA. This is a

Mr. John Greenewald

standard notification that is given to all our requesters and should not be taken as an indication that excluded records do, or do not, exist.

You may contact our FOIA Public Liaisons, Darryl Webb or Zina Kornegay, at (202) 648-7390, for any further assistance and to discuss any aspect of your request. Additionally, you may contact the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) at the National Archives and Records Administration to inquire about the FOIA mediation services they offer. The contact information for OGIS is as follows: Office of Government Information Services, National Archives and Records Administration, Room 2510, 8601 Adelphi Road, College Park, Maryland 20740-6001, e-mail at [ogis@nara.gov](mailto:ogis@nara.gov); telephone at 202-741-5770; toll free at 1-877-684-6448; or facsimile at 202-741-5769.

If you are not satisfied with my response to this request, you may administratively appeal by writing to the Director, Office of Information Policy (OIP), United States Department of Justice, 441 G Street, NW, 6th Floor, Washington, D.C. 20530, or you may submit an appeal through OIP's FOIA STAR portal by creating an account following the instructions on OIP's website: <https://www.justice.gov/oip/submit-and-track-request-or-appeal>. Your appeal must be postmarked or electronically transmitted within 90 days of the date of my response to your request. If you submit your appeal by mail, both the letter and the envelope should be clearly marked "Freedom of Information Act Appeal."

Sincerely,




Adam C. Siple  
Chief

Information and Privacy Governance Division

Enclosure


This document is made available through the declassification efforts  
and research of John Greenewald, Jr., creator of:

# The Black Vault



The Black Vault is the largest online Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) document clearinghouse in the world. The research efforts here are responsible for the declassification of hundreds of thousands of pages released by the U.S. Government & Military.

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**Lessons Learned from the  
Raid of the Waco Branch  
Davidian Compound in  
Waco, TX  
February, 1993**

Executive Operational Training Curriculum



# Lesson Objectives

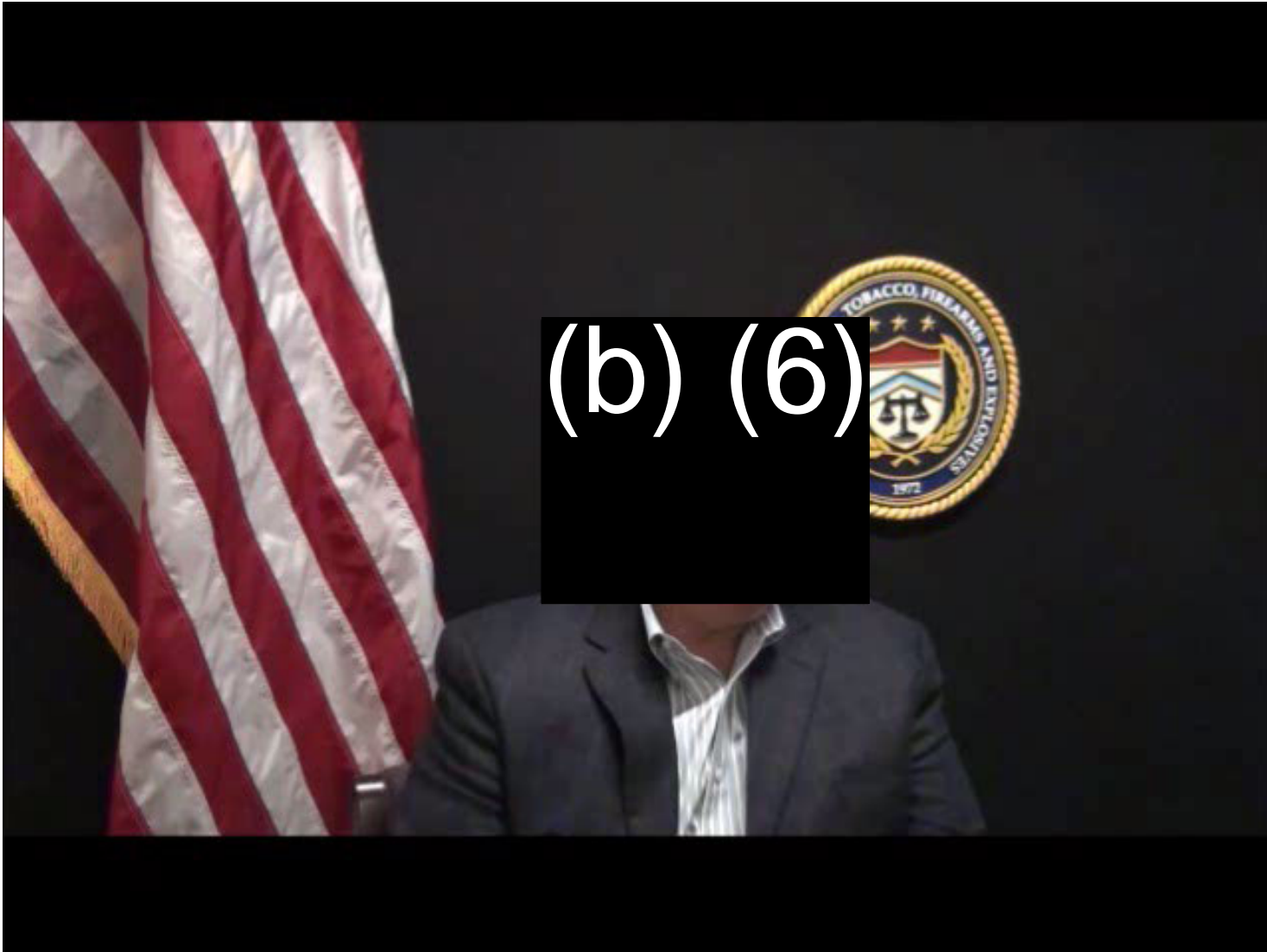
- By the end of today's lesson, students should be able to:
  - Evaluate a mission plan and identify gaps
  - Anticipate and evaluate potential “red flags” or risk factors that could compromise the safety and/or successful completion of a mission
  - Articulate the importance of undercover positions and their appropriate role in mission planning

# Lesson Objectives

- Develop contingency plans to mitigate risks
- Compose a list of parties that should be involved in the operational planning process for a high risk mission
- Explain in their own words the lessons learned from WACO
- Identify programs and policies that were created or enhanced as a result of the lessons learned from the Waco raid

(b) (6)

# Dallas SRT



# Why Are We Here Today?

- Generally: To memorialize the lessons learned from Waco and ensure they are not lost with the retirement of the men and women who were there that day.
- Specifically:
  - Enhance preparedness for a future high risk operation by using the Waco raid as an opportunity to study best practices and lessons learned
  - Enhance understanding of the origin and purpose of current ATF programs and planning requirements



# Training Relevance

- Waco occurred two decades ago, but the lessons learned are equally relevant to ATF's current mission and operations.
- ATF is likely to continue experiencing significant management turnover during the coming years due to the demographics of the Bureau.

# Training Application

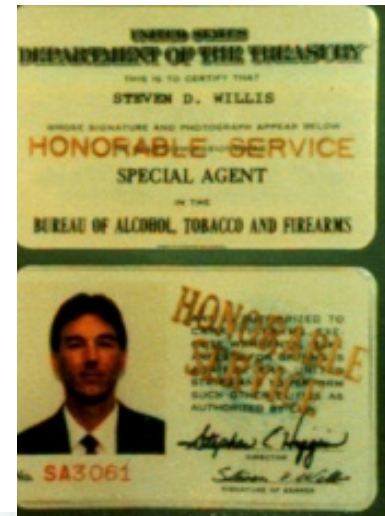
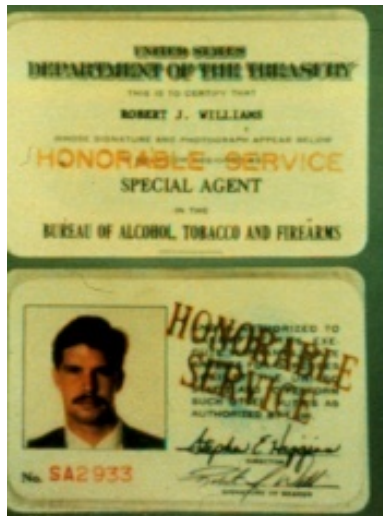
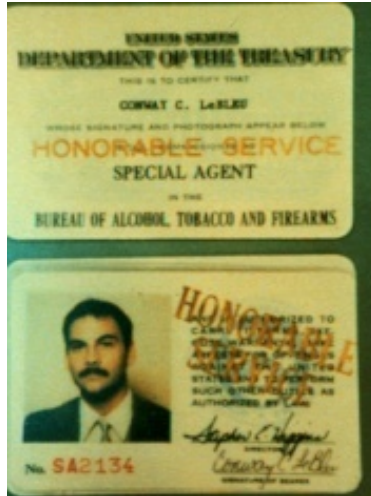
- ATF maintains an ongoing leadership role fighting violent crime
  - Violent Crime Reduction Program “Surges”
  - Project Exile
  - Operation Gideon
  - Violent Crime Impact Team Initiative
- ATF is operating against some of the most dangerous criminals in the most dangerous areas in the country
- As a result, major critical incidents are likely in the future - ATF leaders must be prepared to handle them

# ATF Casualties

- In total, **four** courageous ATF agents were killed, and **28** agents were injured—20 of whom were injured by gunfire or shrapnel.

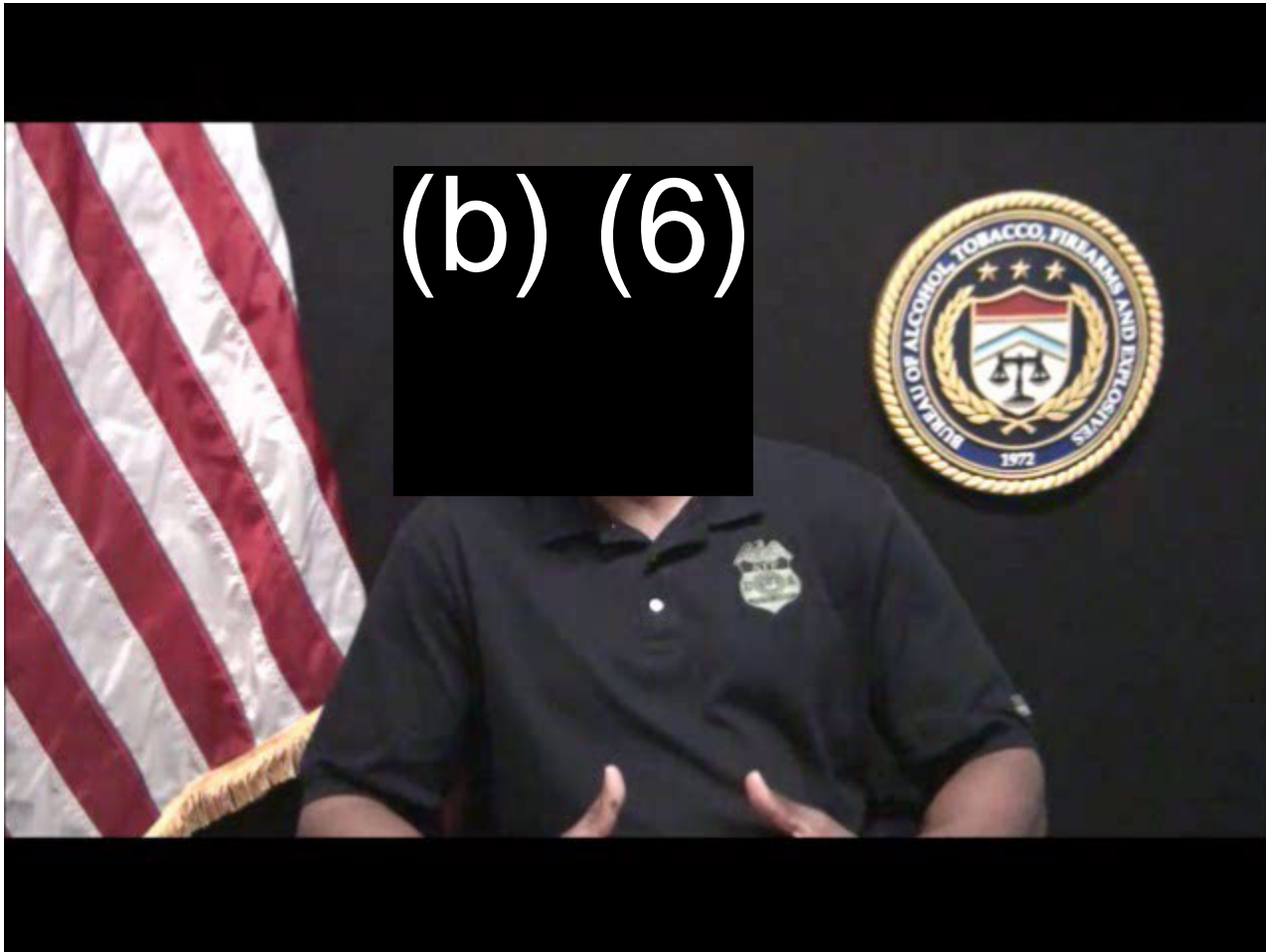


# ATF Casualties



(b) (6)

# Houston SRT



# History of Waco

- *Who*: 137 ATF employees
- *What*: Operation Trojan Horse
- *Where*: Waco, Texas
- *When*: February 28, 1993
- *Why*: Conduct a search warrant operation on the leader of the Branch Davidians, David Koresh

# Who: 137 ATF Employees

- Three ATF Special Response Teams (SRT) from the following field divisions:
  - Dallas
  - Houston
  - New Orleans
- 43 total SRT agents
- 54 other agents assigned to tactical
- Two communication technicians

# Who: 137 ATF Employees

- In addition to special agents:
  - Investigative assistants
  - An intelligence specialist
  - Fingerprint examiners
  - Chemists
  - Explosives technicians
  - A firearms expert



# What: Operation Trojan Horse

- What became known as the “longest shootout in law enforcement history”:
  - High risk warrant operation
  - Unprecedented scope
  - Search of structure inhabited by undetermined amount (approximated 75) of persons, including women and children

# Where & When

- 77 acre compound in Waco, TX known as Mount Carmel
- Property owned and occupied by the Branch Davidians and their spiritual leader, David Koresh
- February 28, 1993

# The Compound



# Why (The Investigation)

- In May 1992 the ATF Office in Austin, Texas received information from the McLennan County Sheriff's Department concerning suspicious UPS deliveries to a religious group called the Branch Davidians.
- The Branch Davidians were led by a man named David Koresh who believed he was the Messiah.

# Why (The Investigation)

- After receiving the initial information from the Sheriff's Department, ATF Special Agent (b) (6) (b) (6) was assigned as the case agent.
- With the support of Assistant United States Attorney (b) (6), Special Agent (b) (6) quickly began looking into the allegations.

# Why (The Investigation)

- A lieutenant at the Sheriff's Department reported that Koresh's properties were patrolled by armed guards, automatic weapons fire had recently been heard at the compound, and a federally licensed firearms dealer was bragging that he had sold a large number of weapons to David Koresh
- The preliminary investigation found that no residents at the compound were legally authorized to possess any National Firearms Act weapons.

# Why (The Investigation)

(b) (7) (E)

Koresh.

- Their review uncovered that the dealer had sold firearms to “Vernon Howell,” David Koresh’s former legal name.
- Additionally, the dealer had sold firearms to other residents at Mount Carmel

# Why (The Investigation)





# Why (The Investigation)

- The former residents shared lurid details about life on the compound.
  - For example, when new residents arrived at the compound, they were required to surrender all of their possessions, including wives, to David Koresh
- David Koresh was the only male allowed to have sexual relations on the compound; former members corroborated reports of sexual abuse
- Former cult members also confirmed the presence of weapons, including grenades.

# Exercise #1: Lessons Learned Brainstorming

- Five minutes:
  - Draft a list of lessons learned off the top of your head
- Share around the room
  - Top two or three most important

# Lesson Plan Outline

- Introduction
- Stage 1: Intelligence Gathering
- Stage 2: Operational Planning
- Stage 3: Mission Execution
- Stage 4: Post-Raid Operations
- Conclusion



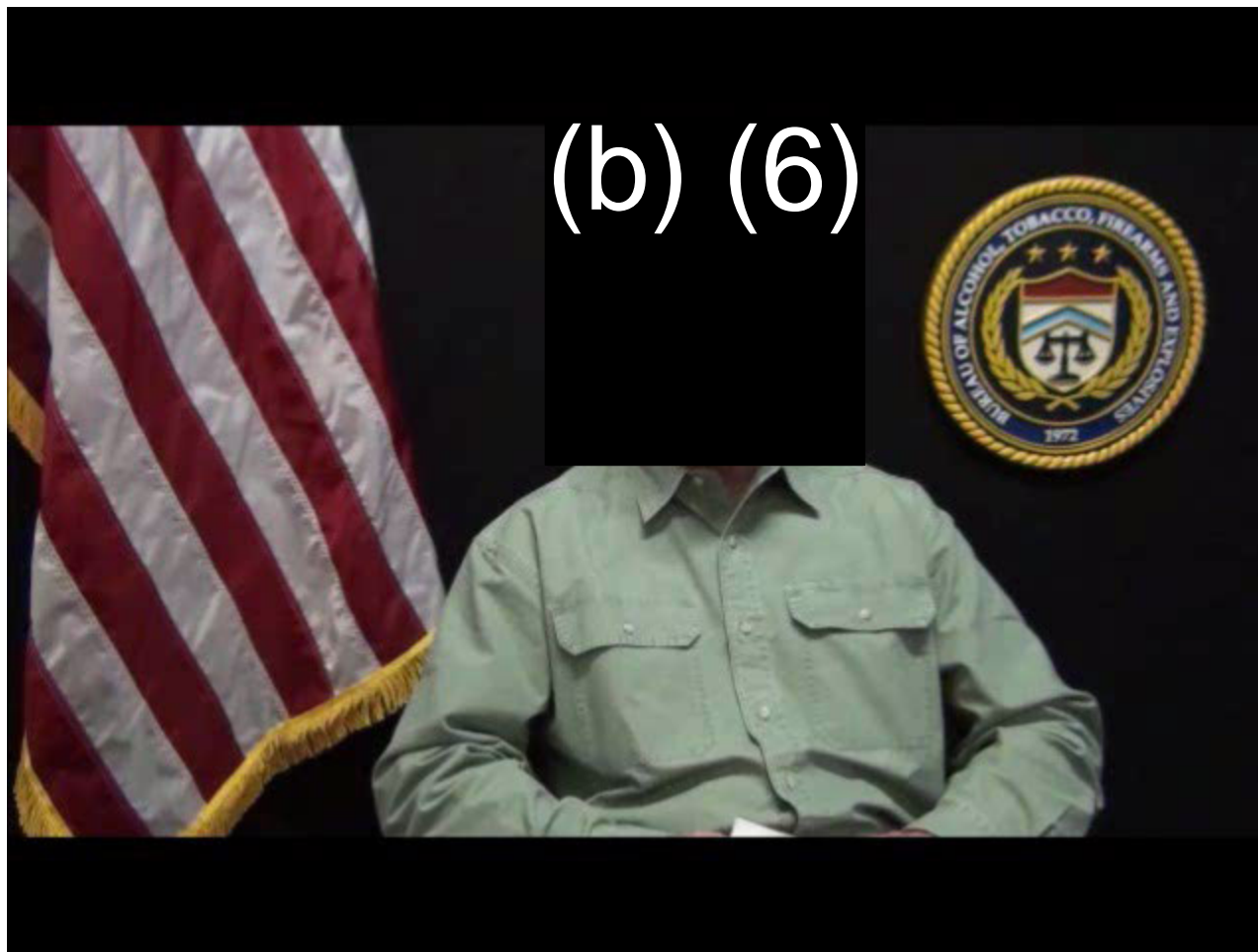
# Stage 1: Intelligence Gathering

# Stage 1 – Lesson Overview

- Koresh's background
- ATF Investigation
- Undercover operations

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# Dallas SRT Team Leader



# Koresh's Background



# Koresh's Background

- When the Compound was eventually searched following the fire, 316 weapons were recovered, including:
  - 139 .223 caliber rifles
  - 54 9mm guns, in addition to Chinese AK-47 assault rifles
  - .50 caliber Barrett semi-automatic rifles
  - 12 gauge shotguns
  - 200 inert rifle grenades
  - Combat vests to hold magazines for 50 people
  - More than 100 conversion kits



# Recovered Items



# Recovered Items



# Recovered Items



# David Koresh



# ATF Investigation

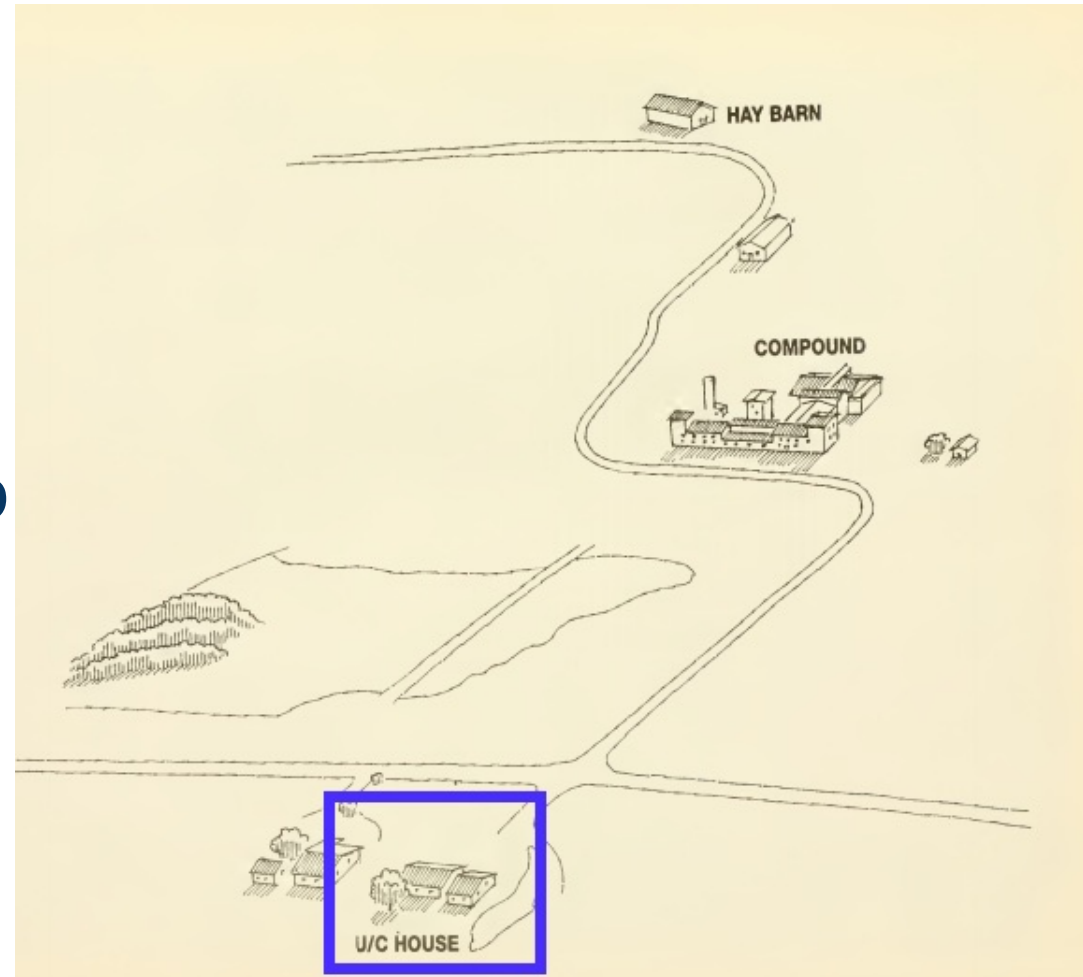
- Case Agent (b) (6) interviewed former cult members who had lived on the Compound. These interviews revealed that Koresh was allowed to have sexual relations with all of the female members, including some who were younger than sixteen.
- Former members also confirmed reports of weapons, grenades, and shooting demonstrations on the Compound.

# Undercover Operations

- On January 11, 1993 an undercover house was established near the Compound.
- The mission of the undercover house was to build a rapport and relationship with David Koresh to determine when/if Koresh left the Compound, if routines existed, and if there were dogs present.

# Undercover Operations

- The undercover house was about one quarter of a mile away from the Compound, so it was difficult to see what was going on

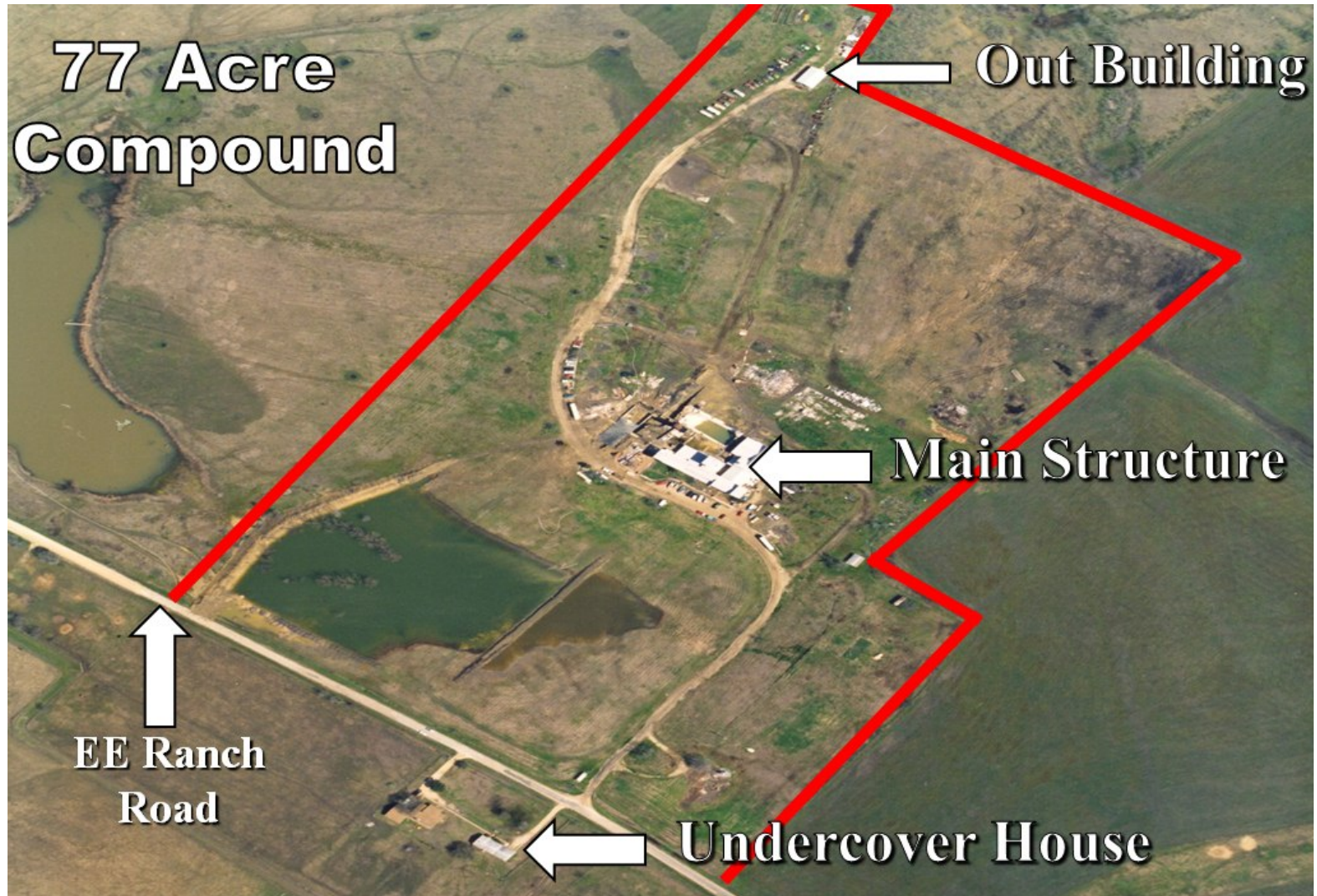


# Undercover Operations

Surveillance equipment included radio scanners, surveillance cameras to take pictures, binoculars, top-secret capable “STU” phone, a regular telephone line, handheld radio, and brief case tabletop radio. However, the U/C agents encountered several technological problems



# The Compound



# Undercover Operations

- There were two motion-activated cameras, but they were not used
- Agents had difficulty with the other cameras
- Former undercover agents report that some of the equipment did not work properly
- The night vision equipment did not work very well

# Lesson Learned: Intelligence

*Agents should receive training and demonstrate competency using technical equipment before planners rely on them to use that equipment to gather intelligence.*

# Undercover Operations

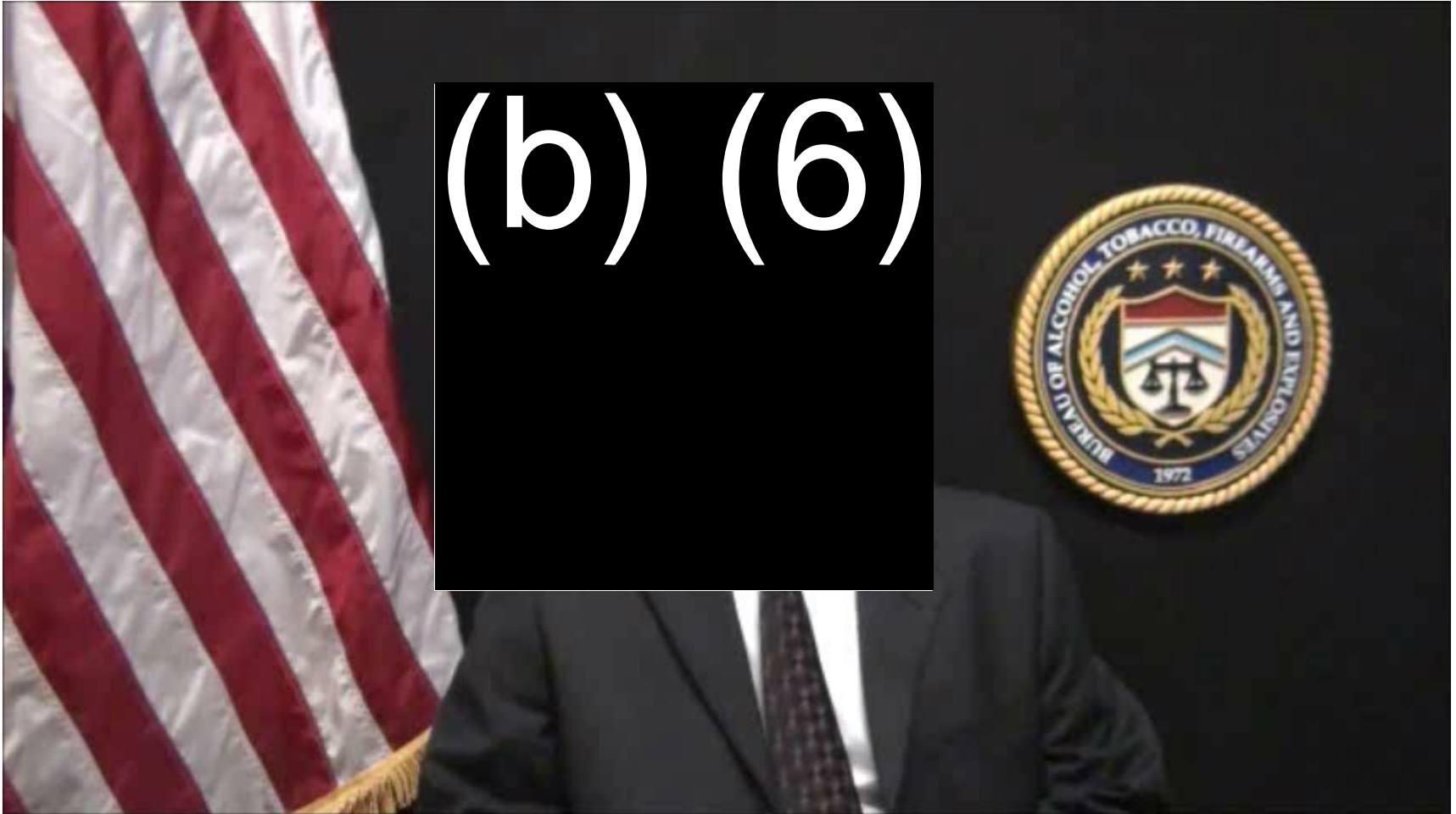
- There was little communication between the tactical planners and the undercover house, hindering the ability of both to successfully complete their tasks
  - UC agents were not always sure what to look for and received little feedback about what they produced
  - Planners did not receive the context of pictures or know that surveillance was eventually suspended
- There was no on-site supervisor.

# Lesson Learned: Undercover Operations

*Undercover operations should be properly supervised, and there must be frequent, direct communication between operational planners and undercover agents to ensure that all relevant information is shared and that agents are obtaining the desired information.*

**(b) (6)**

# Undercover Agent



# Importance of the Pit

- The belief that the men would be working in the pit at the time of the raid became a critical tenet of the operational plan
- The thinking was that if the men were in the pit, they would be unable to retrieve weapons from the arms room, and could be arrested without any exchange of gunfire

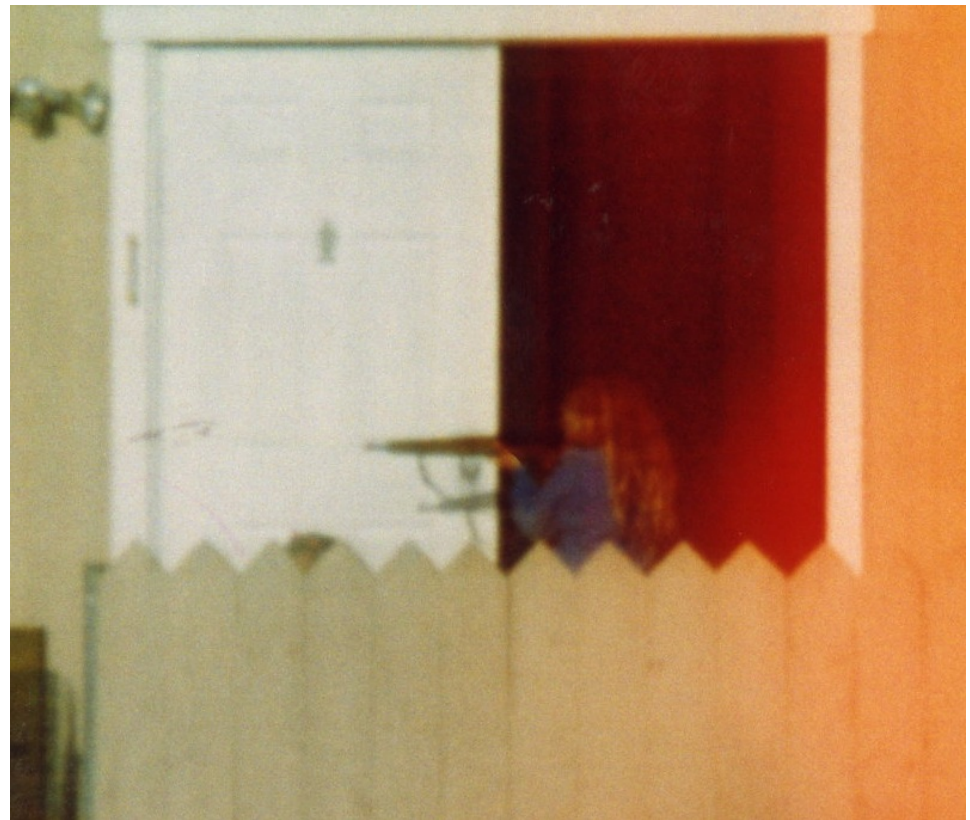
# Erroneous Assumption

- Some of those in the undercover house were unaware that the operation depended on the assumption that the men would be in the pit at the time of the raid
- According to undercover agents, there was never a set schedule at the compound, so it would not make sense to base a plan around when the men would be working in the pit



# Undercover Operations

Had there been an effective flow of information between planners and undercover agents, important assumptions that the operational plan was based on may have been called into question

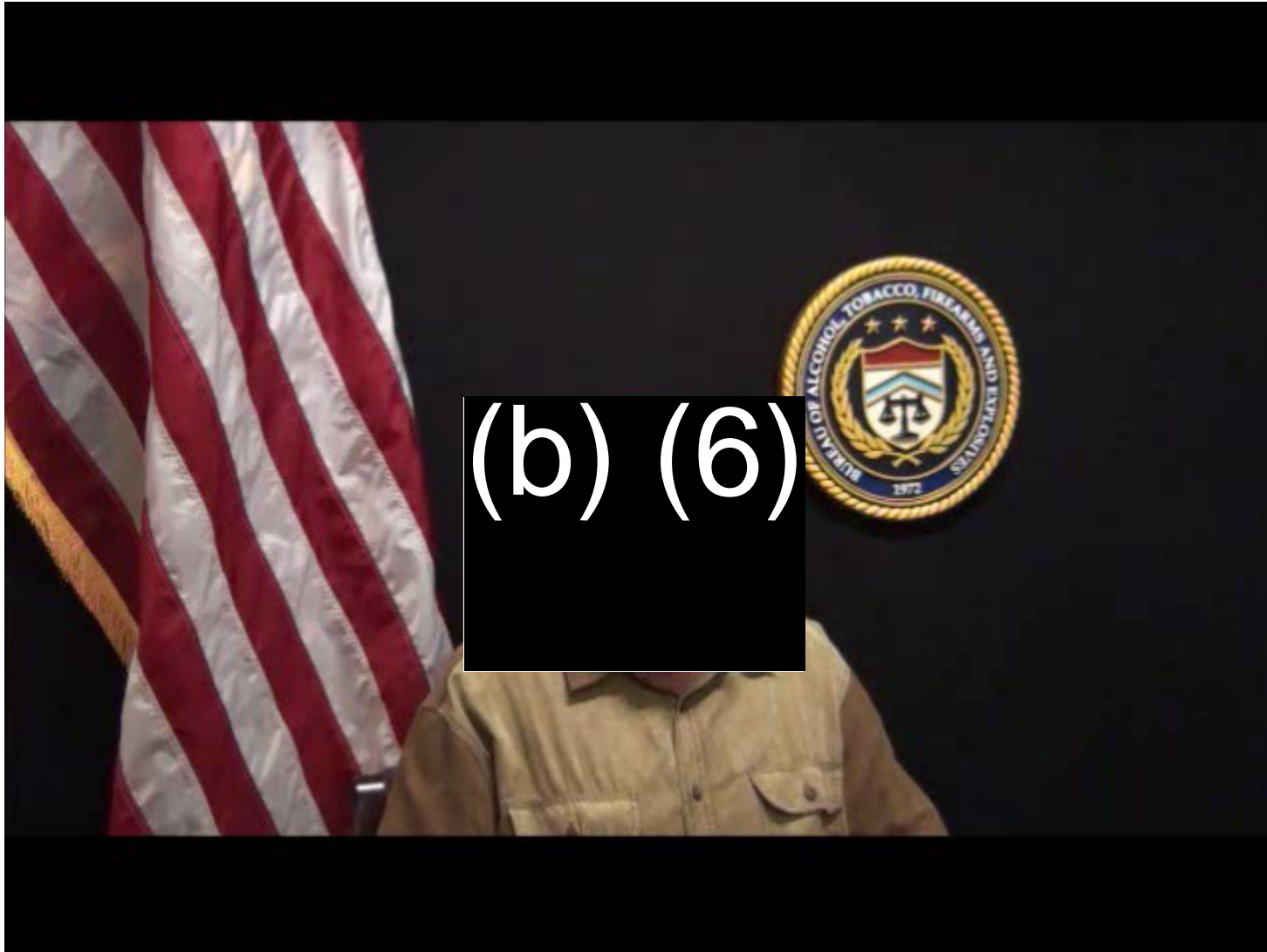


# Lesson Learned: Intelligence Gathering

*Future operations should establish a single point for intelligence collection and analysis.*

**(b) (6)**

## New Orleans SRT Team Leader



# Information Sharing

- The undercover agents gave their information to the case agent, who gave it to the SAC and ASACs, who then decided which information to give to the planners (the SRT Team Leaders)
- Thus, the intelligence received by planners was an incomplete interpretation, several steps removed from what may have actually been said. There was no direct communication with the undercover agents, and they were not invited to planning meetings or part of the planning process

# Lessons Learned: Intelligence Gathering and Communication

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# Stage 2: Planning

# Stage 2: Lesson Overview

- Planning Team
- Planning Exercise
- Final Plan
- Previous Successes
- Logistics/Equipment Oversights
- Lack of Contingency Plan

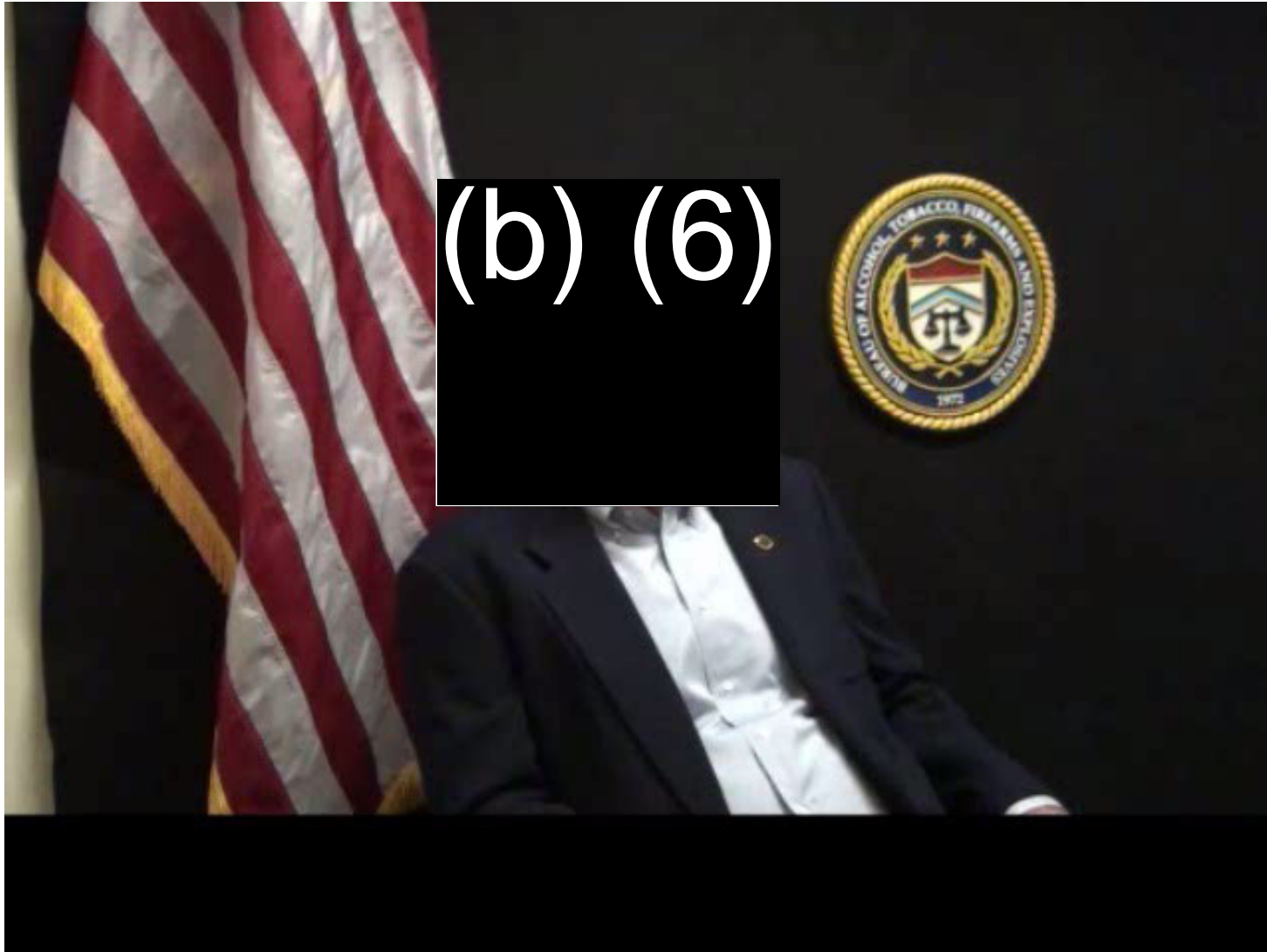
# Planning Team

- The four SRT Team Leaders met several times to develop the operational plan. The plans were brought to the Houston SAC (who was the Incident Commander) and he would either approve or reject updates made to the plan.
- The SACs were not involved in the tactical or support planning, and did not offer direct oversight.

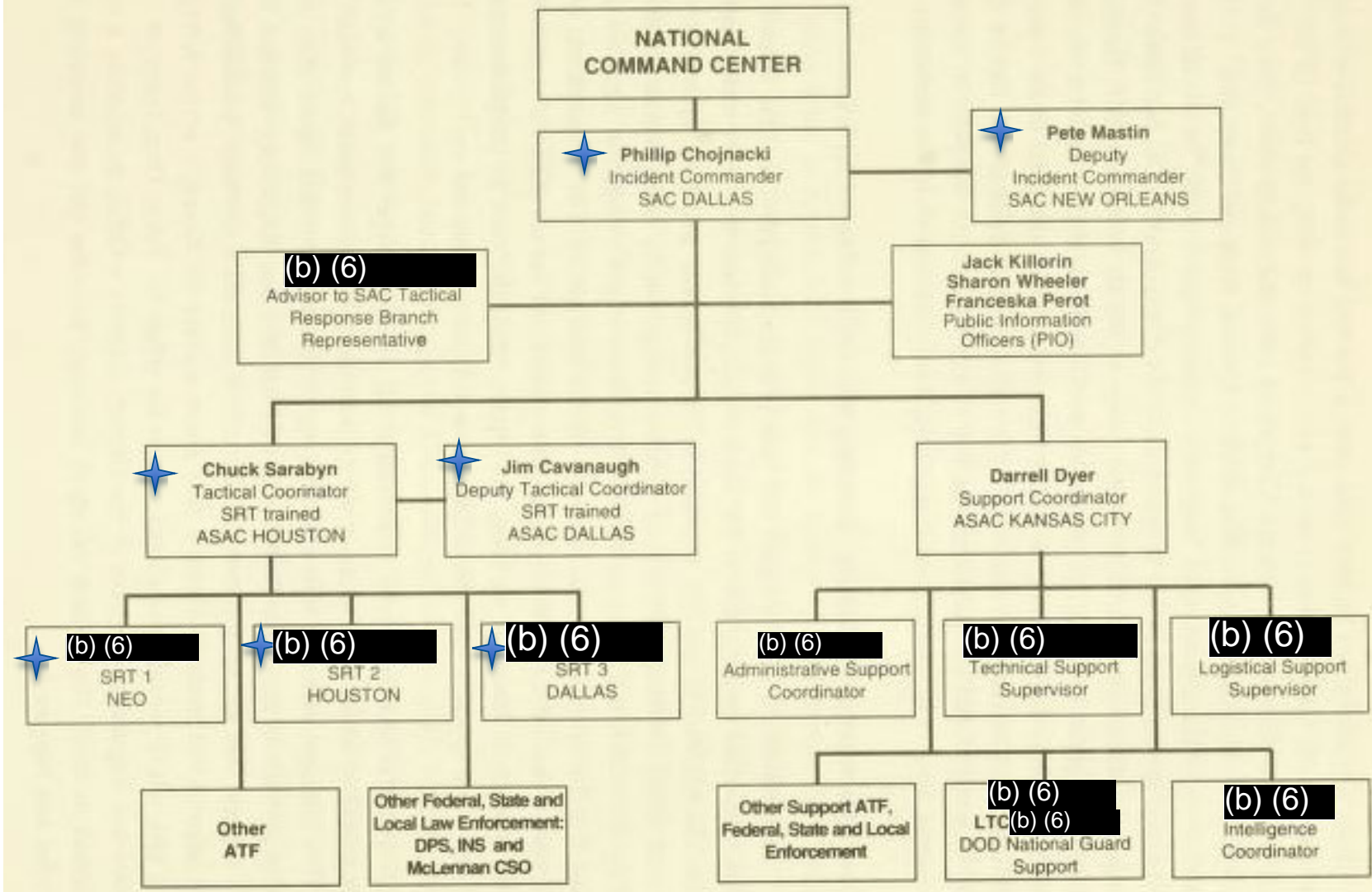


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## New Orleans SRT Team Leader



# NATIONAL RESPONSE PLAN (NRP)



# Planning Team: Then & Now

## Waco Operation Based on National Response Plan (outlined in DOT Blue Book Report)

- **Incident Commander (SAC)**
- **Adviser to SAC, Tactical Response Branch**
- **Tactical Coordinator (SRT trained ASAC)**
- **Deputy Tactical Coordinator (SRT trained ASAC)**
- **3 SRT Leaders (from each field office represented)**

## Present Team for Multiple Enforcement Operation (Operational Planning: ATF O 3210.1B)

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# Incomplete Planning Team

- Forward Observers Program Involvement
  - Forward observer teams were not invited to the planning sessions
  - Additionally, forward observer teams were not allowed to be put in place long before the operation because it was feared that they could be spotted and their cover could be blown
- Sharon Wheeler, the PIO assigned to the mission, was brought in only two days before the operation.

# Incomplete Planning Team

- Intelligence used by planners stated that Bible study took place regularly from 9-10 am, and then at 10 am the men moved to the pit
- Additionally, planners believed that the men only had weapons when there was a threat present. They believed Koresh feared a coup and re-collected all of the weapons after the threat had passed

# Lessons Learned: Planning Team

- *A set structure should be in place to ensure a clear plan has been written and reviewed at the appropriate levels*
- *Case agents and undercover agents should be involved in the planning stage*
- *PIOs should be involved in planning meetings and/or updated on plans*
- *Plans for high risk operations should receive close scrutiny*

# The Target Location

- The Compound to be searched was a two story building with a three or four story addition with the appearance of an observation tower. The complex had its own water tank, several outhouses, and could be self-sustaining for an extended period of time. There was also a small frame shack at the entrance driveway. Overall the property was 70-80 acres.

# The Compound



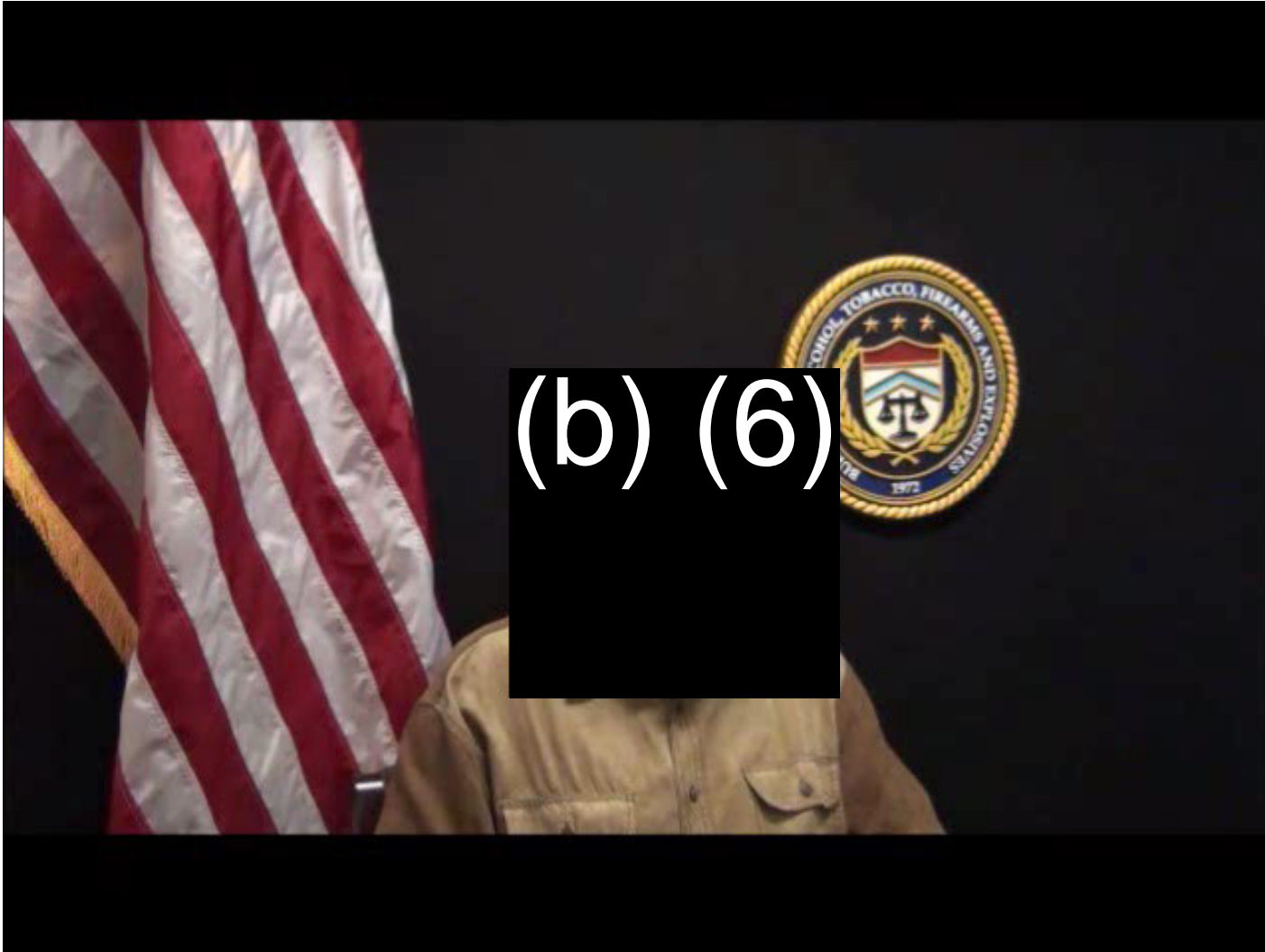


# Exercise #2: Plan Options

- Arresting Koresh Off Site
- Use of Diversions
- Contain and Call-Out Siege
- Soft Entry
- Dynamic Approach

(b) (6)

## New Orleans SRT Team Leader



# Final Plan

The final operation plan involved a dynamic approach: The understanding of the planners was that the men worked in a pit outside the compound **away from their weapons** and women and children at a set time each day. This would be a critical time to come in, because the men would be unarmed, and **the women and children would be out of harm's way.**

# Final Plan

The operation involved a surprise entry by special agents and the SRT teams, by travelling to the Compound in cattle trailers with canvas tarp covers. This was previously used successfully to surprise a group of heroin dealers operating from a remote 107-acre ranch in Texas and so was seen as the most effective way of transporting 75 agents without attracting attention.



# Previous Success

- The plan at Waco was strongly influenced by a previous successful ATF operation against a heavily armed and fortified target in 1985

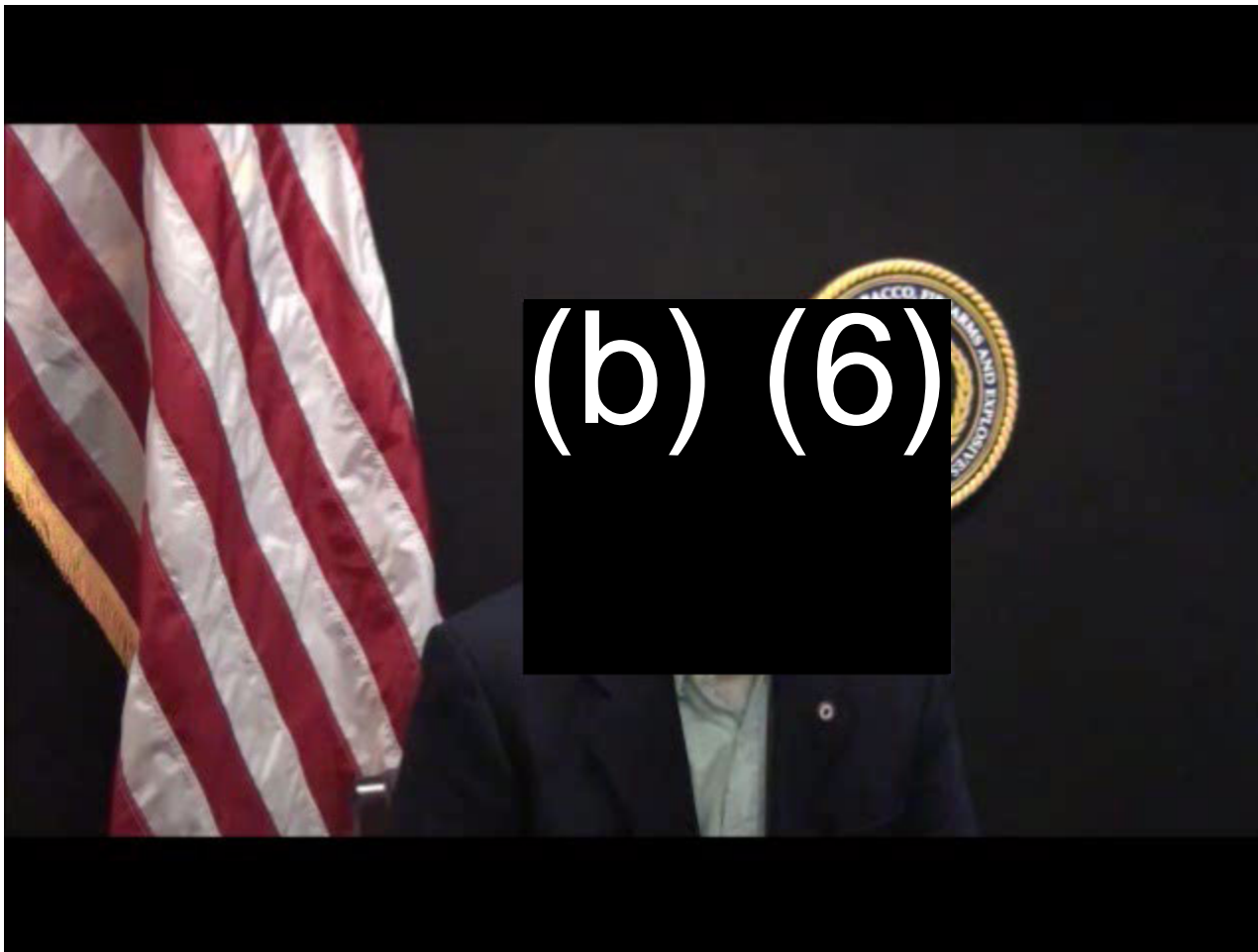


# CSA Success

- 360 acre compound
- Leader also thought he was Jesus and preached Armageddon
- Armed with land mines, machine guns, antitank weapons
- Despite heavy weaponry, Apocalyptic predictions, the mission was a success

**(b) (6)**

# Raid Team Member



# Logistics/Equipment

- A few months prior to the operation Headquarters pulled all of the AR-15s out of the field offices. These firearms have a much further reach than the MP5s, which were limited to two shot bursts.
- Waco planners sought an exception and requested 24 AR-15s for the mission, however only six were provided
- Also, some of the equipment provided had issues, such as improper ammunition, firearms that jammed, and magazines with hunting blocks in them.



# Logistics/Equipment

Many did not bring enough ammunition because it was assumed that there would be very few shots fired, and they feared additional ammunition would weigh them down and hinder hand to hand combat ability



# Logistics/Equipment

- Several agents interviewed recalled taking a smaller weapon such as a 9mm and leaving behind larger guns such as MP5s, in addition to vest plates, to better suit themselves for a hand-to-hand fight. The vest plates were very heavy and they felt it could slow them down.
- Helmets were not required, so some agents who had them chose not to wear them, for reasons of maneuverability.

# Lessons Learned: Equipment

- *Agents should be provided with the firearms and equipment that will maximize the chances of mission success*
- *Equipment should be tested to ensure it functions properly before an operation begins*

# Medical Preparations

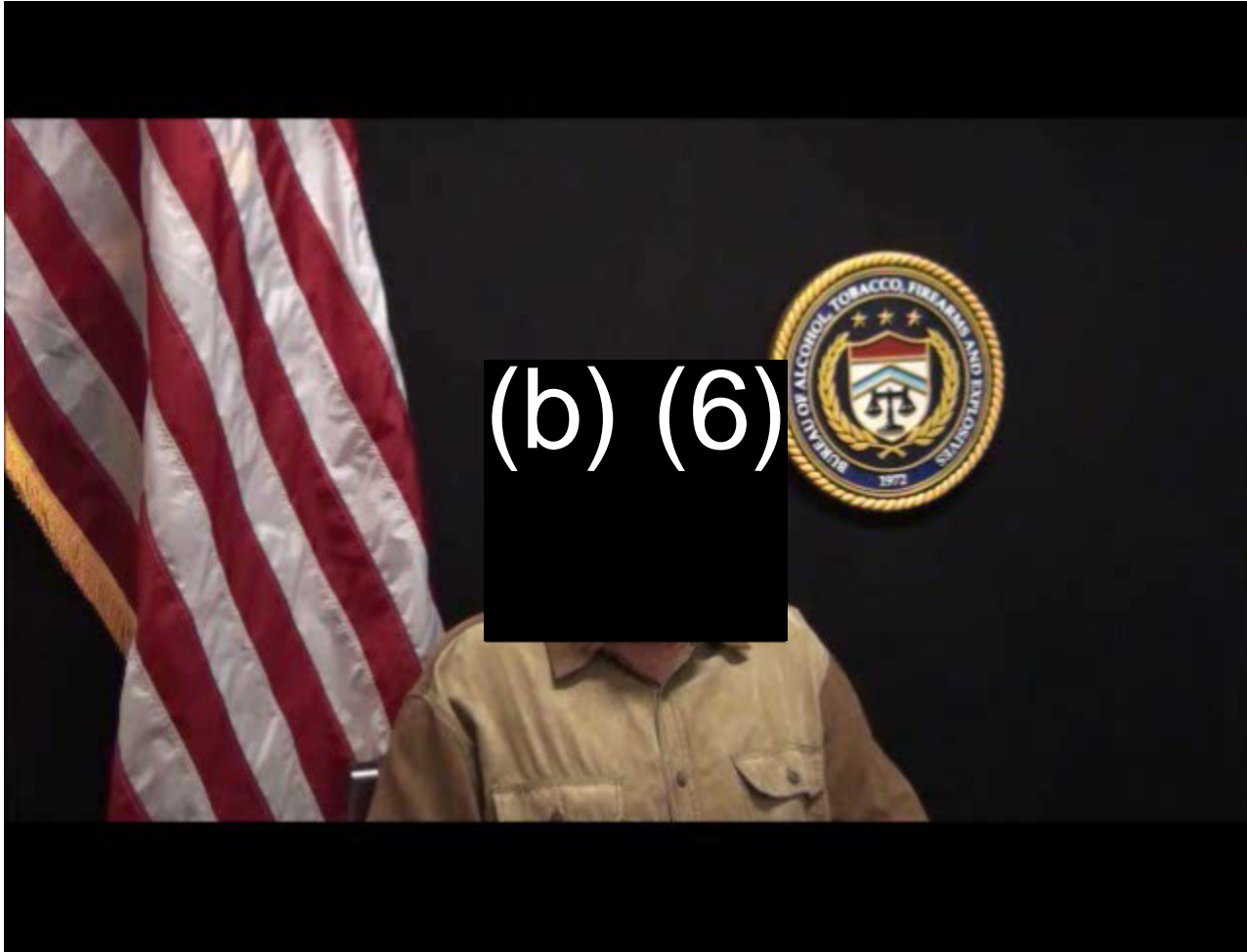
- Medics were not required to attend all of the operational training, as they were seen as support agents, and it was anticipated that they would be treating minor injuries.
- The medical equipment was insufficient, to the point that one brought his own kit from the National Guard.

# Lack of Contingency Plan

- Agents recall that there was no “meaningful” contingency plan outlined for them
- Agents did practice aborting the raid by exiting the cattle trailers and withdrawing to a safer area. However, this was not a realistic option. Once the cattle trailers entered the compound, they were unable to turn around, and if agents retreated they would be extremely vulnerable to Davidian gunfire

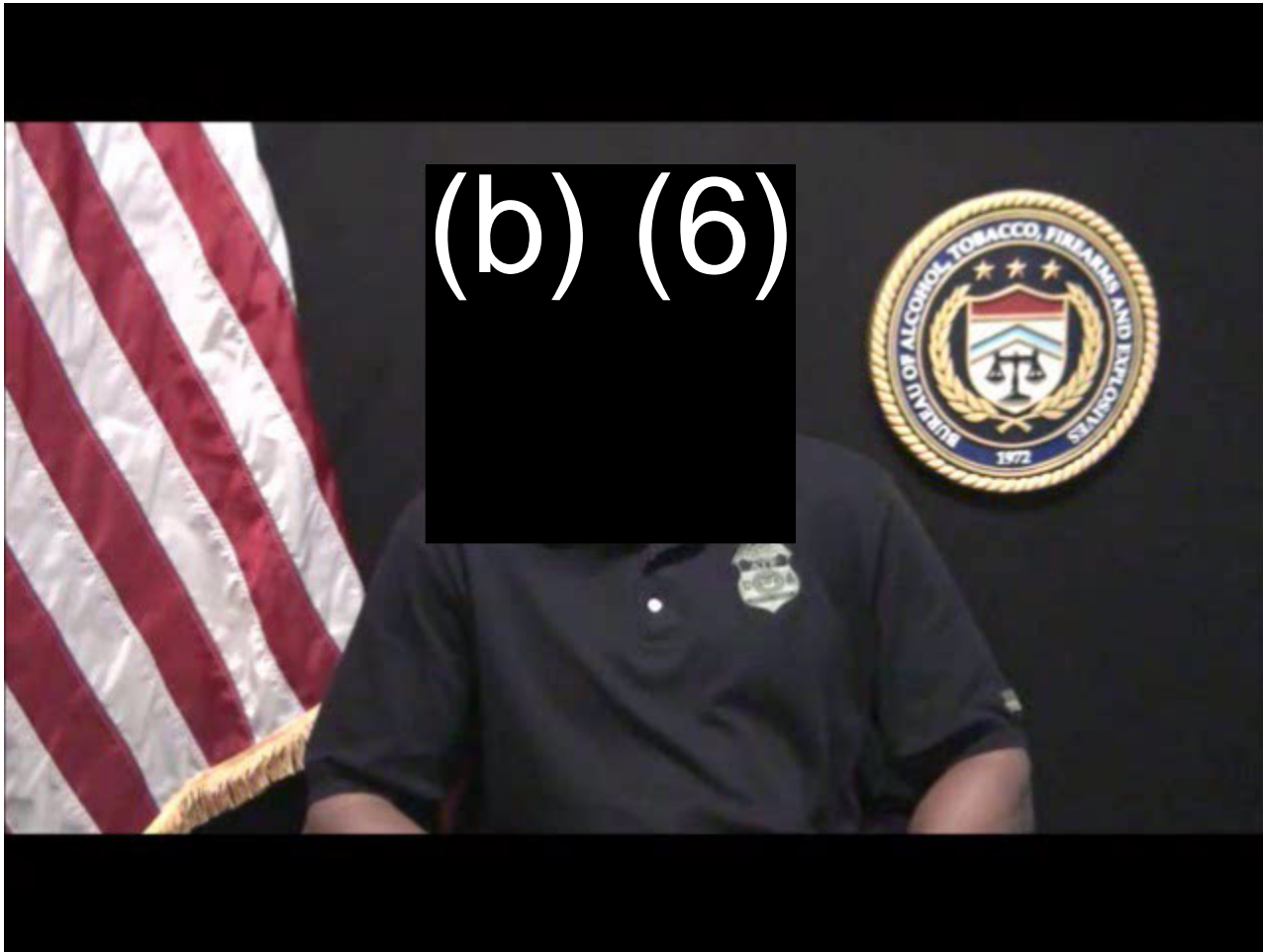
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## New Orleans SRT Team Leader



(b) (6)

# Houston SRT



# Lesson Learned: Contingencies

*Raid plans must contain carefully constructed contingency plans so that the momentum of moving forward with an operation does not overpower careful reasoning and decision-making. Written plans should clearly list the conditions that must be present for an operation to proceed.*





# Stage 3: Mission Execution

# Stage 3: Mission Execution

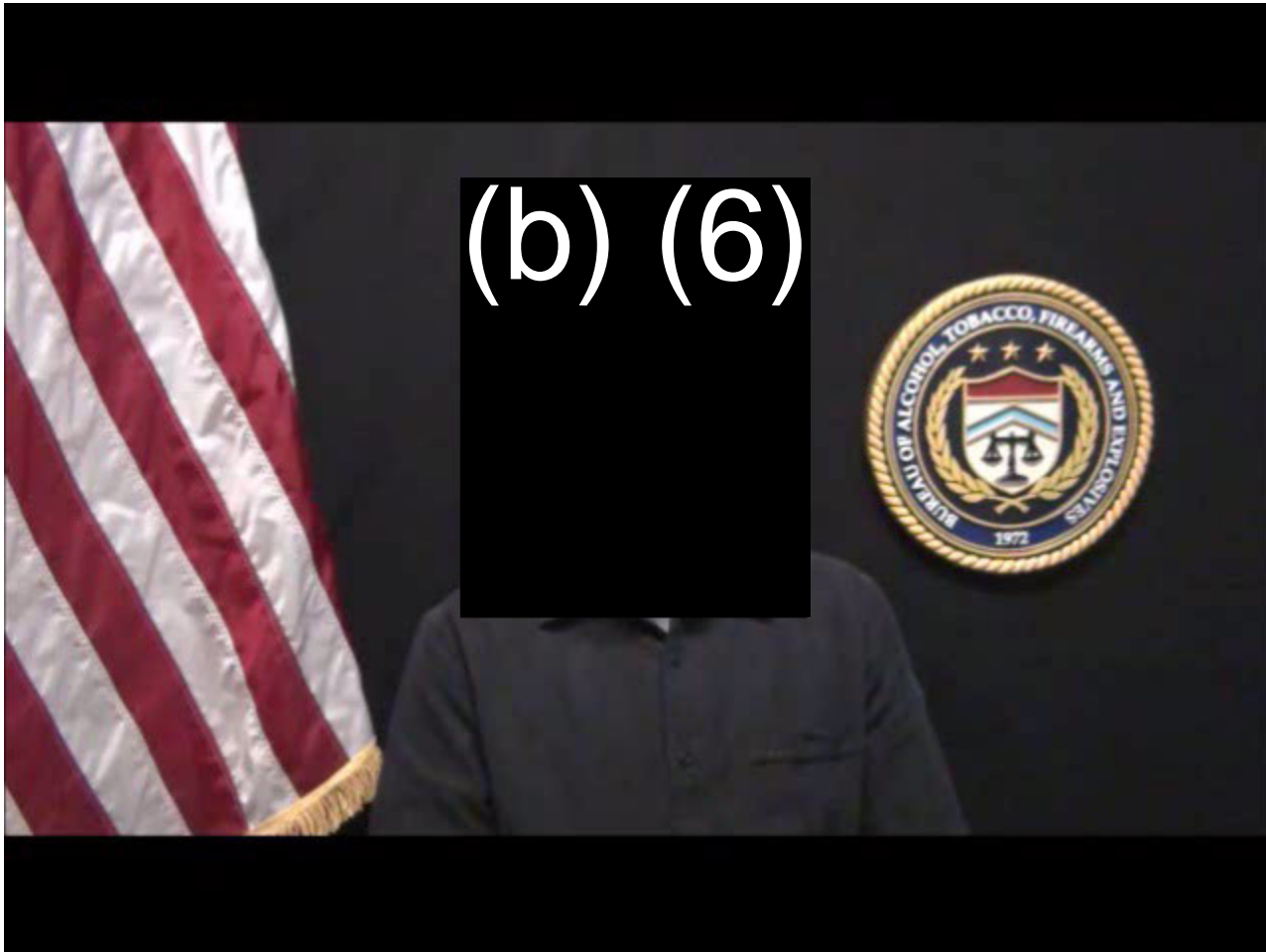
- Red Flags
- Element of Surprise Lost
- Agency Culture
- Lack of Subject Matter Expert Input
- Incident Command Nonexistent
- Ceasefire & Withdrawal

# Red Flags

- The Saturday prior to the raid one of the undercover agents called the Tactical Commander to inform him that the Davidians had purchased a large amount of food (around seven thousand dollars worth) from Sam's Club.

(b) (6)

# SRT Member



# Red Flags

- On the day of the raid ATF personnel discovered members of the media were already inside the roadblock perimeter before it was set up
- The forward observers advised that there were no men working in the pit
- An undercover agent expressed concern about a member of the Davidians who worked as a mailman speaking to two men in a Ford Bronco. (It was later discovered that these men were with the media, asking for directions.)

# Something Amiss



# Lesson Learned: Incident Command Structure

*Need an incident commander to be present at the command post, able to receive real time intelligence, and with tactical knowledge and experience to make calls as situations change.*

# Element of Surprise Lost

- U/C agent left the compound and reported to the Deputy Tactical Coordinator, who was at the U/C house, that he had observed activity that he perceived as meaning the element of surprise was lost. He then telephoned the Tactical Coordinator to report the same.
- The Tactical Coordinator spoke with the Deputy Tactical Coordinator, who reported that there was no observable activity outside the Compound.
- The Tactical Coordinator shared the information with the Incident Commander, indicating that if they hurried they could still be successful and the Incident Commander agreed.

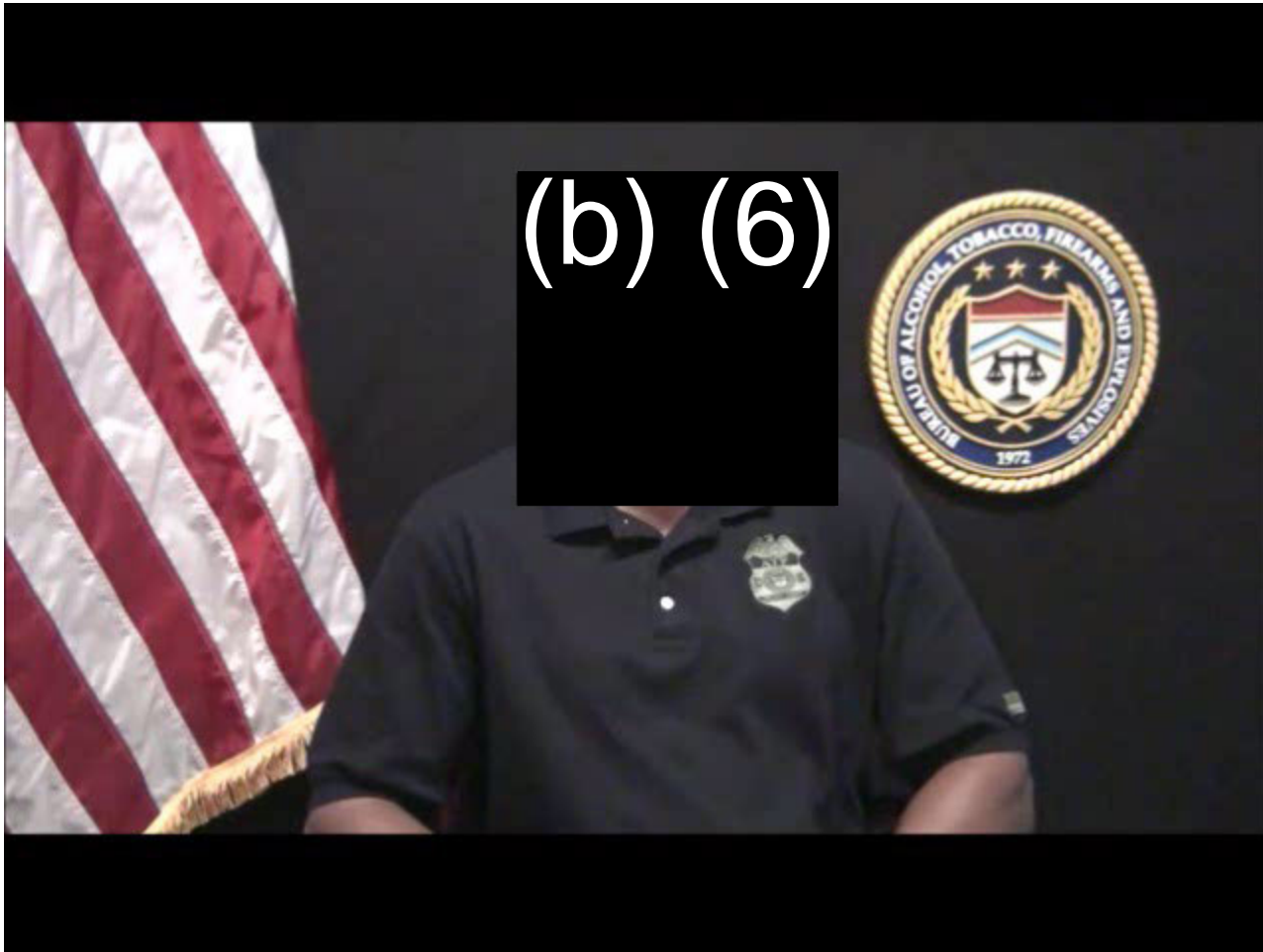


# Lesson Learned: Incident Command Structure

*For a large-scale operation, the planning must be done early in a coordinated fashion with clearly delineated responsibilities. This delineation includes determining who has the power to abort.*

(b) (6)

# Houston SRT member



# Marvin Richardson, Dallas SRT

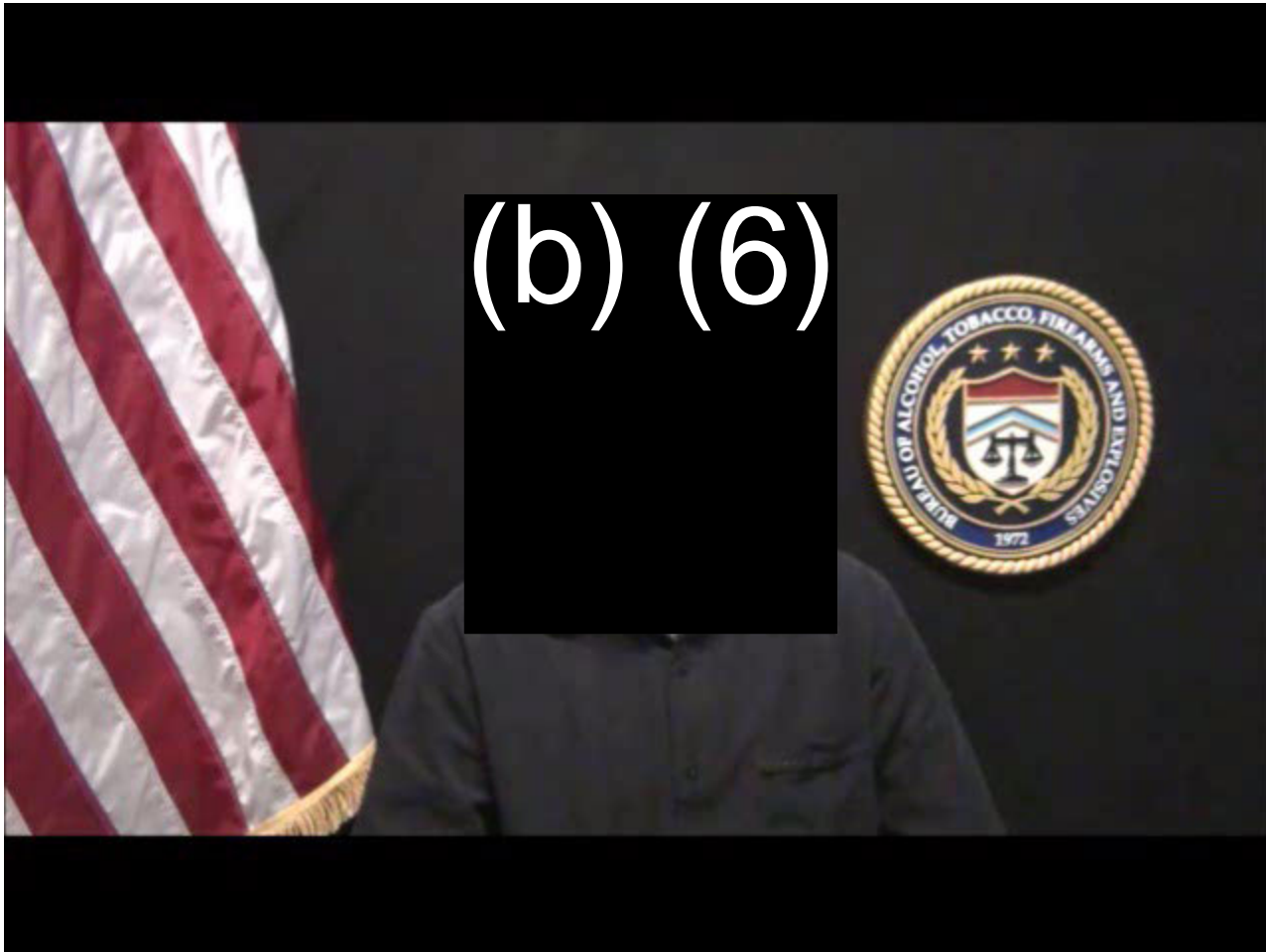


# Lesson Learned: Agency Culture

*Every member of the team must accept responsibility and demonstrate the ability to ask questions and voice concerns regarding an operation if the risk factor has changed*

(b) (6)

# SRT Member



# Rescue Mission Mentality

(b) (6) who was tasked with operation logistics, had mapped out local McDonald's restaurants so that they could bring in Happy Meals for the children while the warrant was being executed

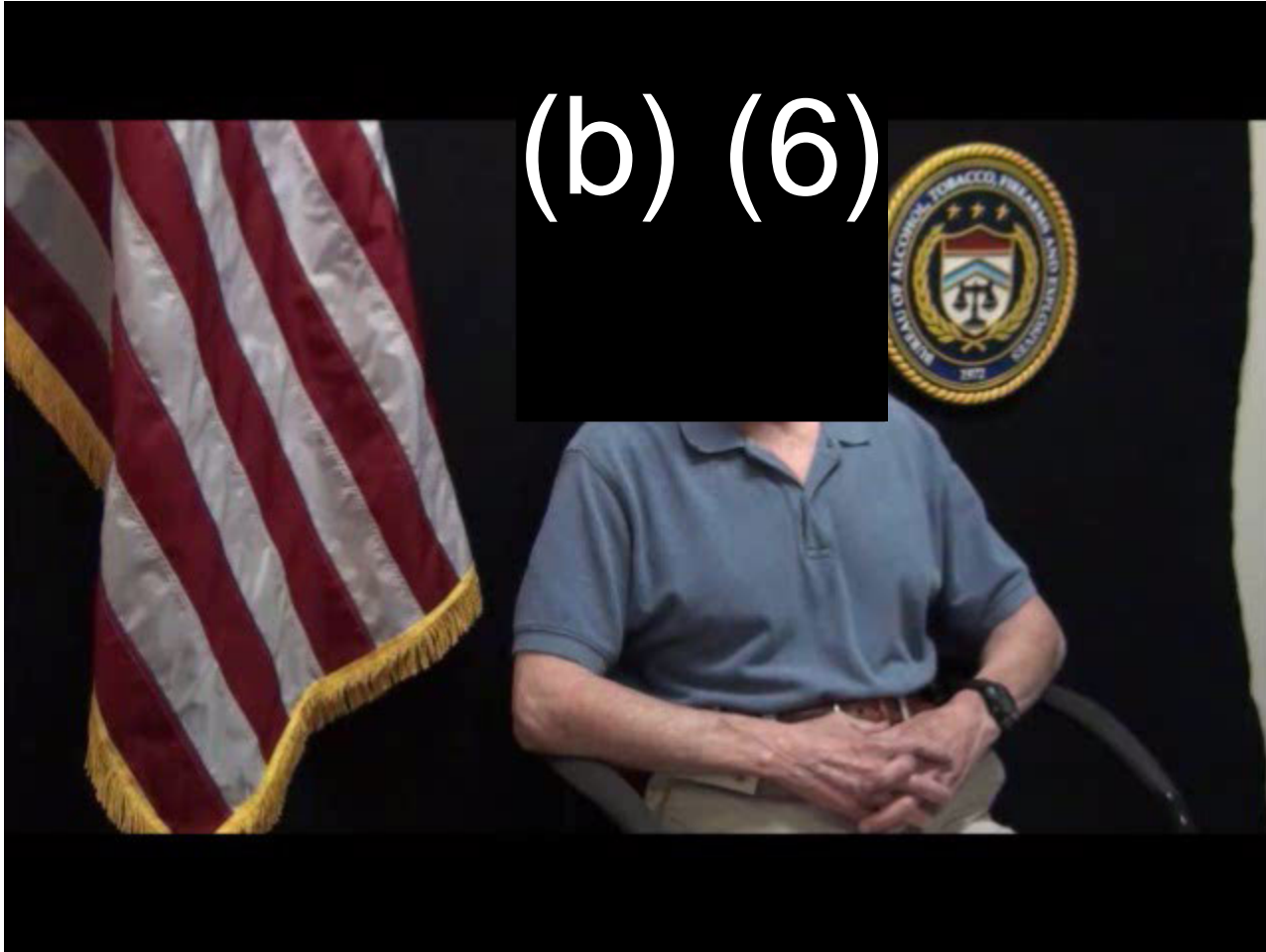
- The night before the raid agents went to K-Mart or Wal-Mart to buy candy and drinks for the kids in the compound. They had planned to hand out the snacks during the raid

# Lack of Expert Input

- Had the planners incorporated feedback from a subject matter expert, they would have realized that the Branch Davidian members were not looking to be rescued.
- Certain agents, thinking of the sexual assault accusations and the great number of children within the compound, were of the “rescue mission” mentality and were grossly unprepared for the amount of resistance they encountered.

(b) (6)

# Logistics Coordinator





# What is the cult mentality?



# Lesson Learned: Expert Input

*Planners should consider seeking outside expertise to clearly understand the mindset of individuals they are planning to engage.*

# Execution



# Raid Execution

- While it became clear that the Davidians were expecting a law enforcement operation to occur, it appeared that they did not realize that the cattle trailers that pulled onto their property were part of the raid. The momentary tactical surprise worked, and shots were not fired at the agents until they were out of the trailers.

# Helicopters

- Shortly before the raid began the Incident Commander and the Dallas SAC decided to observe the raid from a helicopter.
- The helicopters came in the back of the Compound, with the intent of diverting attention from the trailers coming in the front. The helicopters came under fire when they were around 350 meters from the Compound and were forced to land.

# Helicopters



# Lack of Incident Command

Managers of the raid were unable to communicate or lead effectively within moments of the start of the raid:

- Within roughly the first thirty seconds, the Incident Commander (Houston SAC) was half a mile away in a downed helicopter as was the SAC of the Dallas Office.
- The Deputy Incident Commander (SAC New Orleans) was pinned down next to a truck.
- The Tactical Coordinator (Houston ASAC), was also pinned down, and the Deputy Tactical Coordinator (Dallas ASAC) was across the road in the undercover house.
- Three of the four SRT team leaders were wounded
- **COMMAND POST IS DEVOID OF RAID LEADERSHIP**

# **Lesson Learned: Incident Command & Communication**

***Incident commanders should be located in a place where their ability to communicate and analyze information is maximized***



# Shots Fired

- One of the first shots hit the engine of the lead pickup truck. Because there was no way for the trailers to turn around, the cattle trailers were stuck in the compound.
- As the agents exited the second trailer and heard gunfire, many initially believed it to be coming from the dog teams.

**(b) (6)**

# : Serving the Warrant



(b) (6)



# The Raid

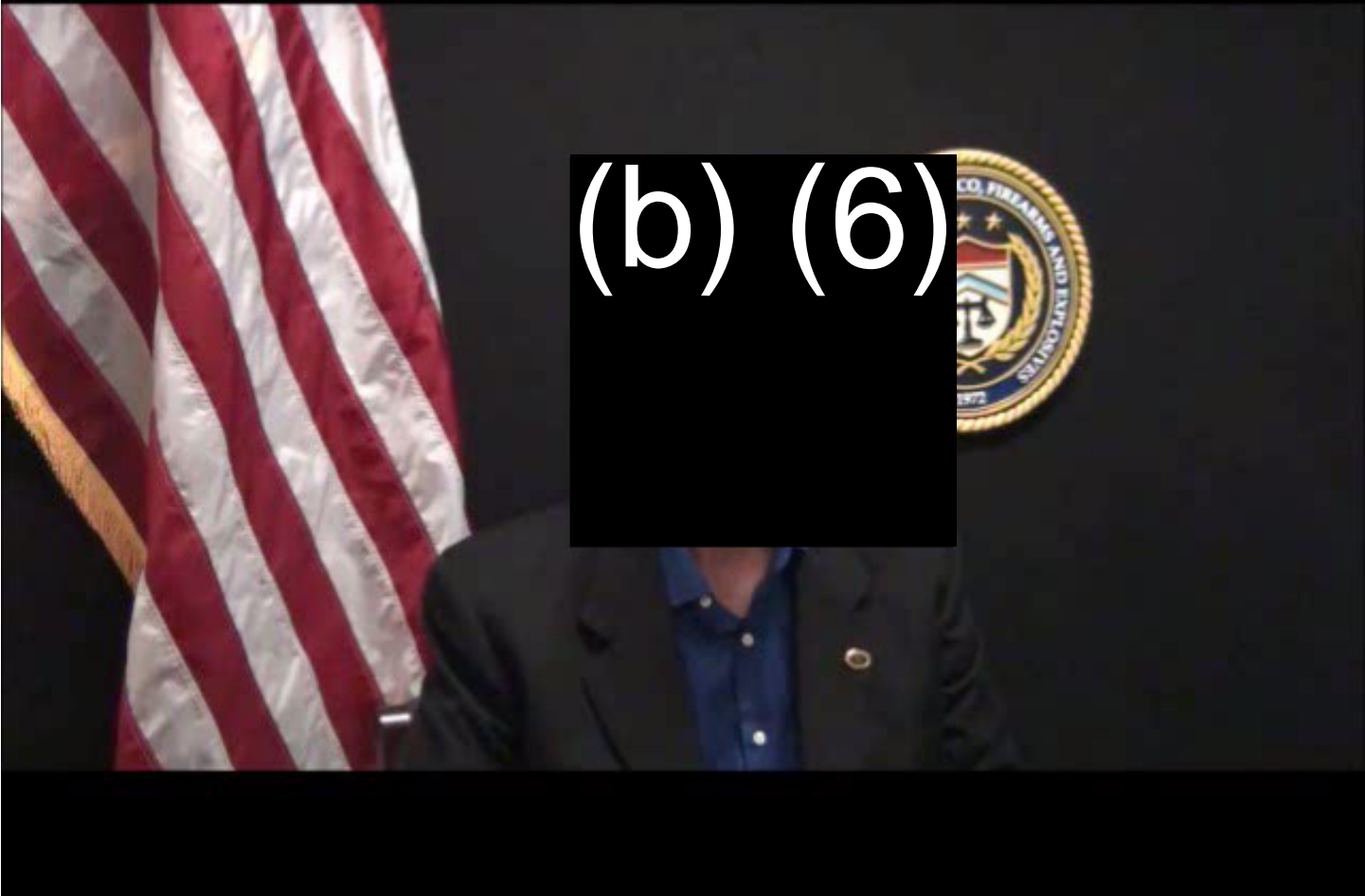


# No Escape

- As agents realized that they could be pinned down for an extended period of time, they began conserving and pooling ammunition, and turning off radios to conserve battery power.
- EMS specialists would not come into the compound due to the danger of the situation. ATF medics had some supplies, but they were limited.

(b) (6)

## Dallas office

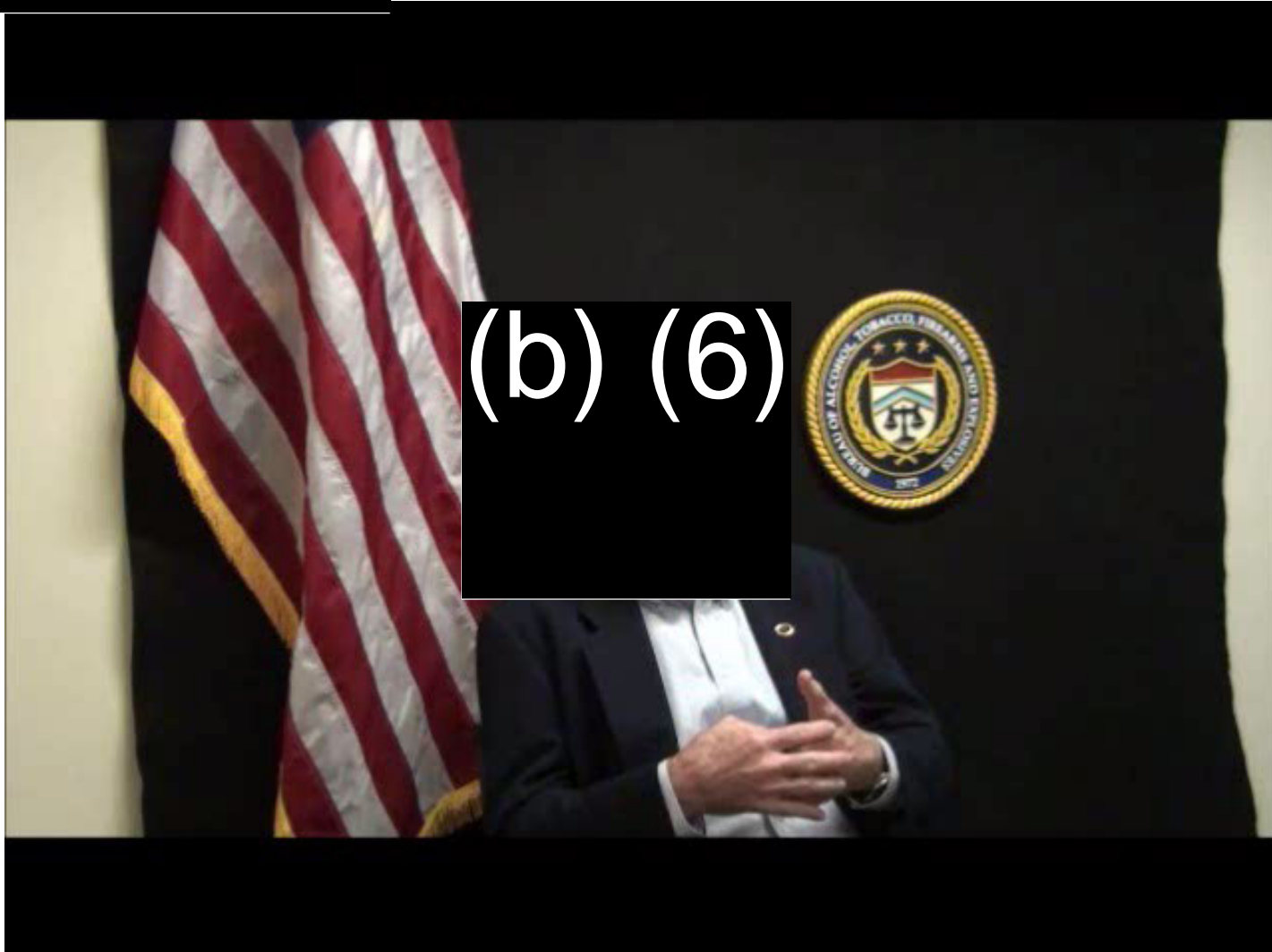


# Lessons Learned: Logistics

- *Plan for the worst - consider water, ammunition, knee pads, energy bars*
- *Must be aware of and plan for weather conditions*

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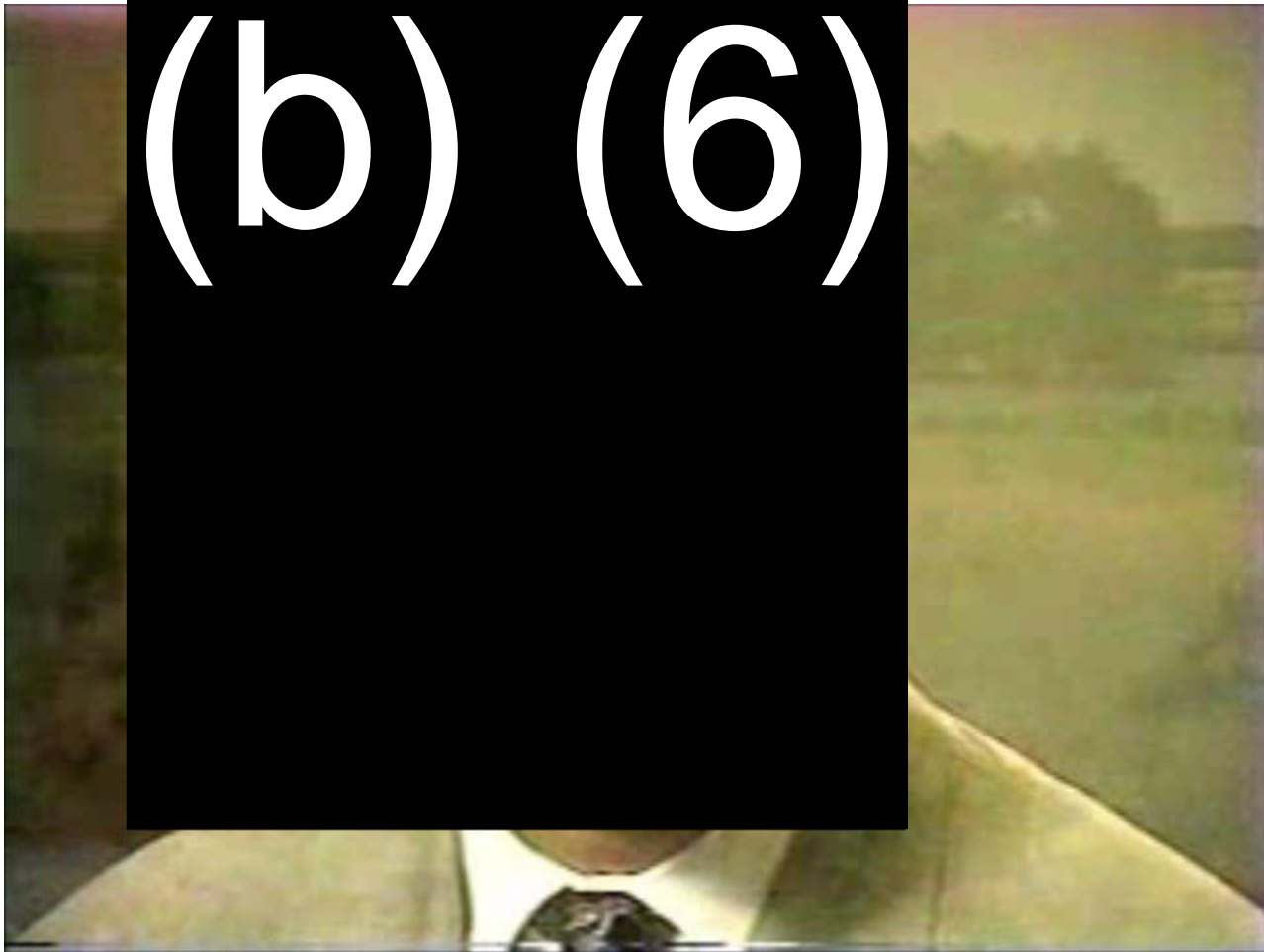
## New Orleans SRT Team Leader





(b) (6)

# Wounds



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Pain

(b) (6)



# Ceasefire

- The ASAC from Dallas (in the U/C house) found the phone number for the Compound in a neighboring house and made contact with Steve Schneider (seen by many as second in command at the Compound)
- The two managed to arrange a cease-fire, which took a few minutes to take hold. The ASAC described King's precise location (King had a radio) and had someone in the Compound verify he was there and allowed the agents to come to collect him. Agents improvised a ladder as a stretcher to carry King away.

# Ceasefire

- Agents exited the Compound slowly with their hands raised. This was a particularly vulnerable moment, and made the necessity for an exit strategy particularly clear. The forward observers provided some cover, however, remaining in position and prepared to return fire as the agents retreated.
- The deceased agents, and those unable to walk were placed in available vehicles, as there were only three ambulances on site.

# Ceasefire & Withdrawal



# Exercise #2: Table Top Exercise

- Small groups
- Review information provided
- Critical thinking exercise – opportunity to with apply lessons learned, identify:
  - What are the risks and how can they be mitigated?
  - What information is still needed, and how will it be acquired?
  - What capabilities will be needed? how will they be delivered?



# Stage 4: Post-Raid Operations

# Stage 4: Post-Raid Operations

- Notification Process
- Debriefing
- Peer Support
- Handling the Media
- ATF Public Statements

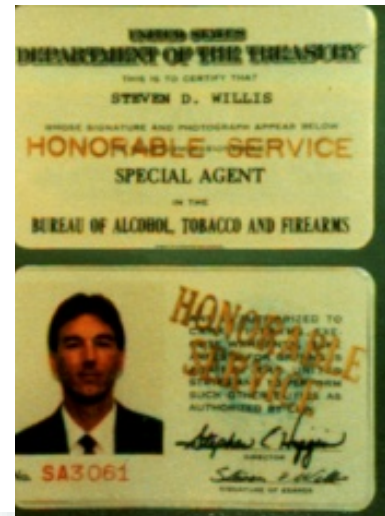
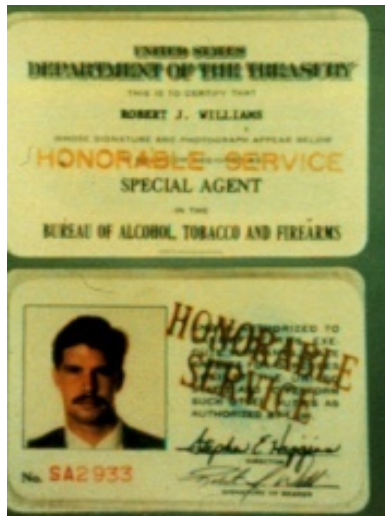
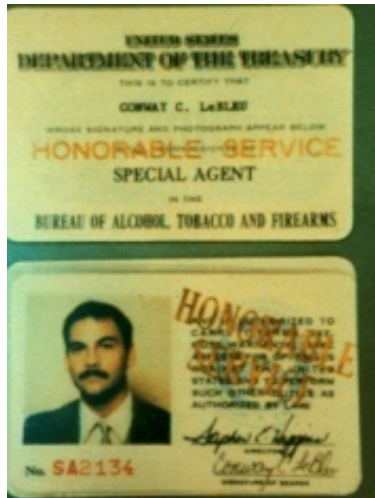


# ATF Casualties

- In total, four courageous ATF agents were killed, and 28 agents were injured—20 of whom were injured by gunfire or shrapnel.



# ATF Casualties

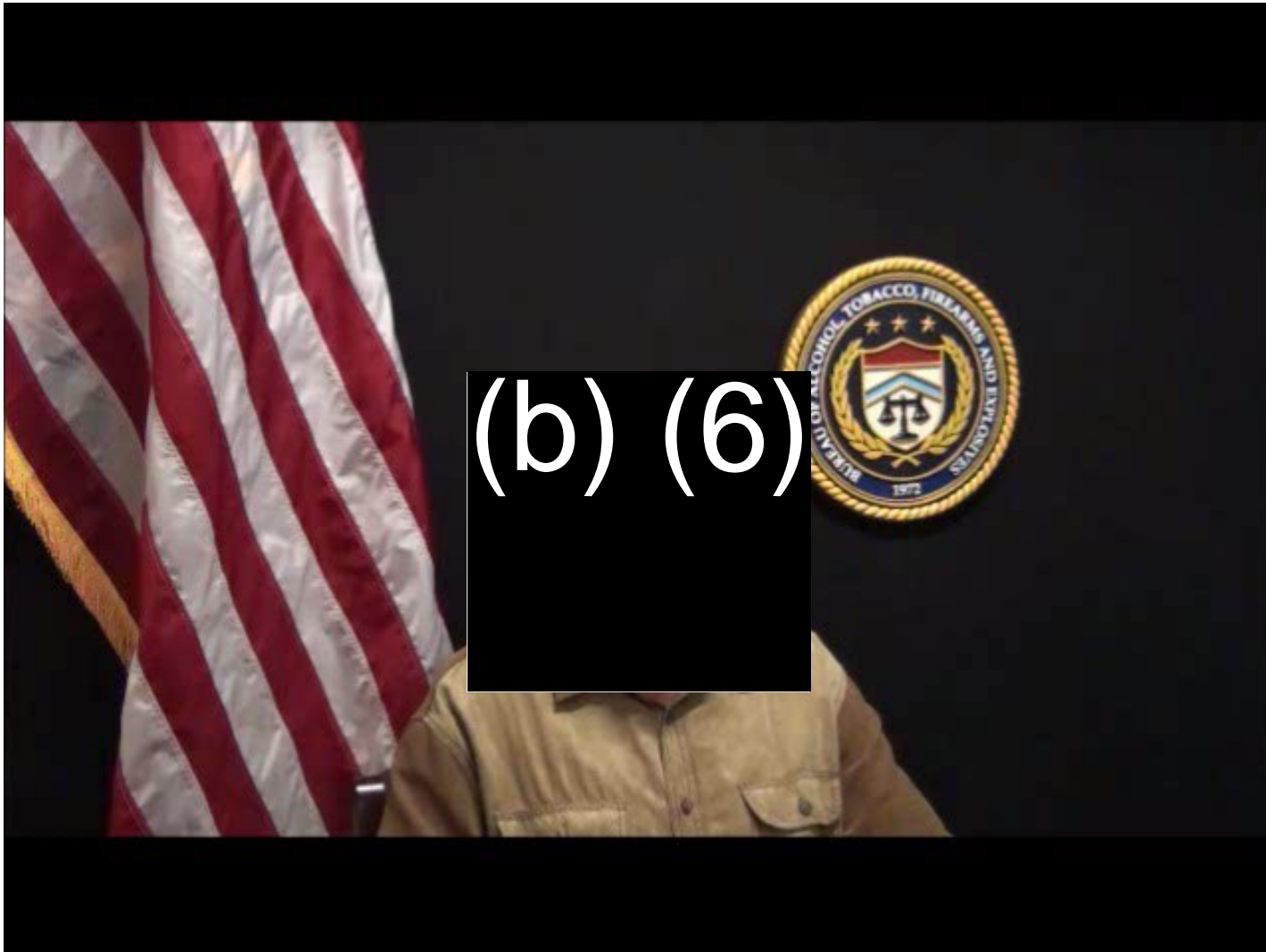


# The Long Walk

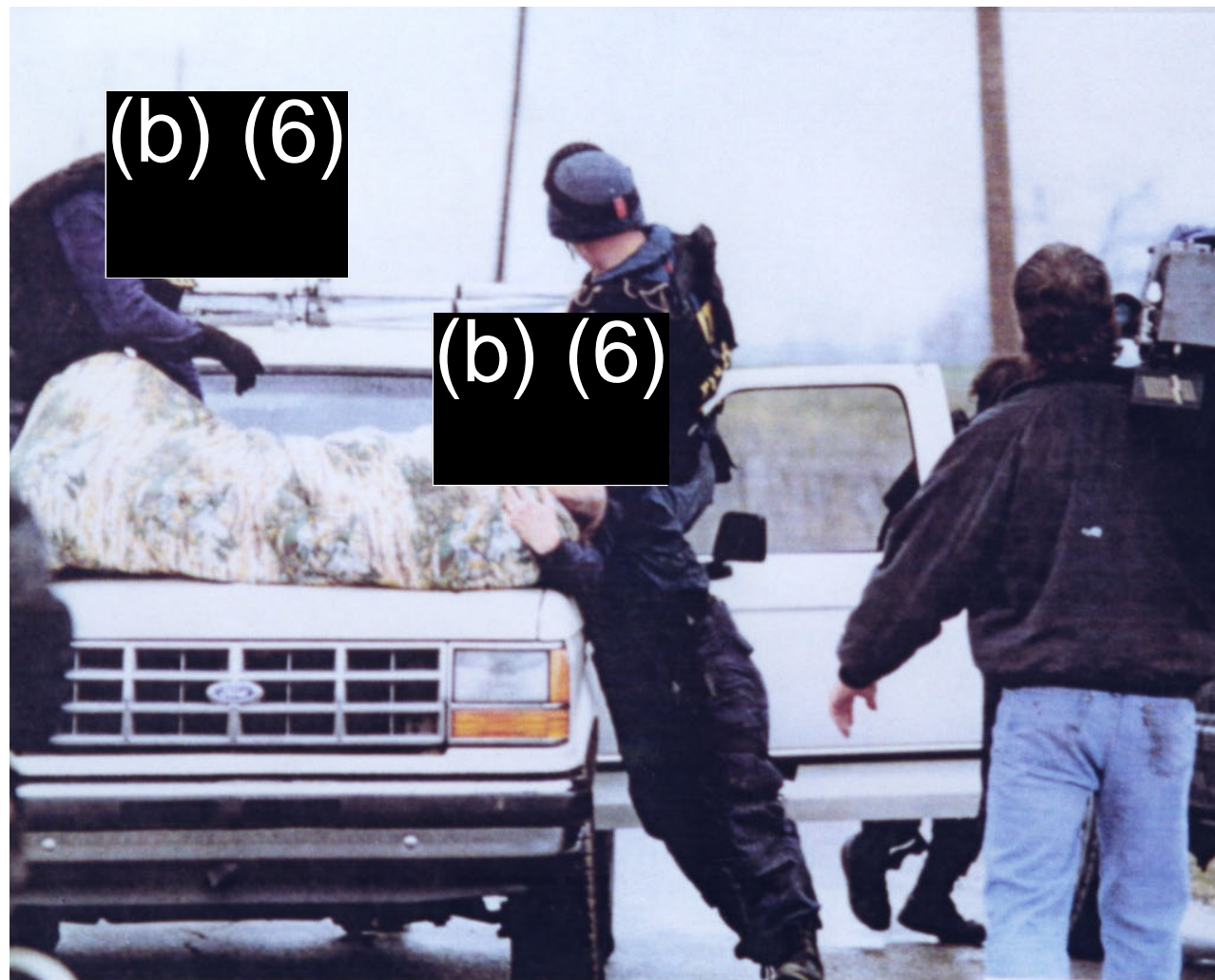


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## New Orleans SRT Team Leader



# Notification Process



# Lesson Learned: Notifications

- *SACs and ASACs should know and adhere to the notification policy*
- *Family members should be notified as soon as possible of death or injury*

# Current Survivor Protocol

- ATF's Survivor Protocol (ATF Order 2292.2) states: "All supervisors and managers should be familiar with the roles and responsibilities when an employee under their direction dies in service."
- "It is the policy of the Bureau that in the event of an employee's death a well-planned Survivor Protocol will be conducted to provide the family/survivor and co-workers with appropriate logistical assistance."
- The Protocol outlines various forms of assistance and counseling that can aid the recovery process and includes a checklist and clear explanation of roles and responsibilities to ensure all appropriate tasks are completed

# Debriefing

- A day after the operation ATF leadership brought agents into a gymnasium for a debrief:
  - Those present felt it was a one-way communication with management speaking at them, not hearing from them
  - The tone was considered inappropriate and angered agents



# Debriefing

- Agents were especially frustrated by the lack of comment on the deceased and wounded agents, or acts of bravery that had taken place the previous day.



# Debriefing

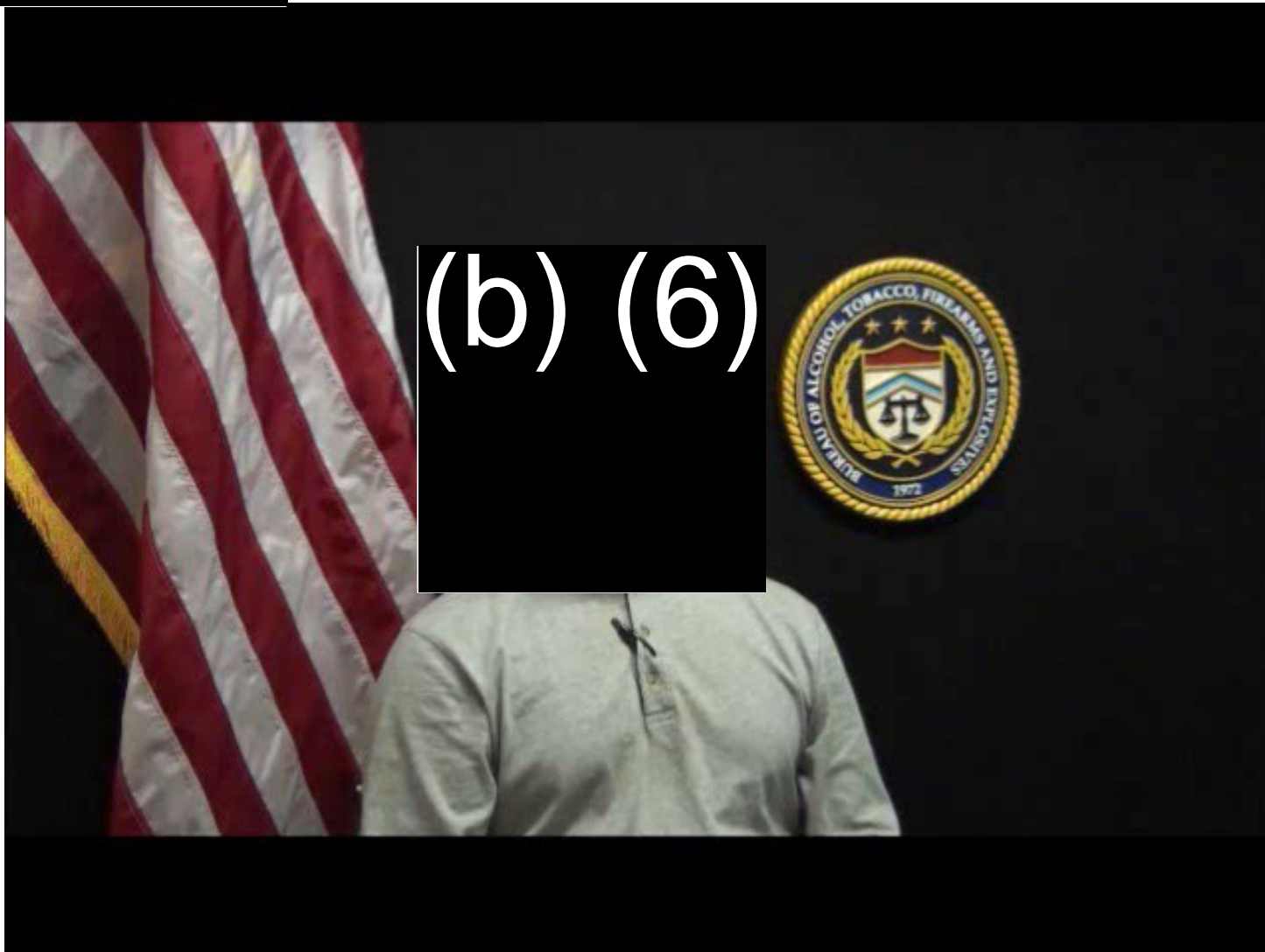
- The Texas Rangers interviewed agents, but its scope was limited to criminal investigation
- Most agents were not debriefed until the treasury review interviewed them long after the raid, and many were frustrated by their inability to discuss what had happened and share their story, even after the treasury review.
- Agents felt the failure to debrief, and related failure to communicate accurate information to the media, represented a lost opportunity to dispel myths and conspiracy theories about the raid

# Lessons Learned: Debriefing

- *Debriefings must be respectful of the courageous actions of agents – both survivors and deceased*
- *A debriefing must be a two-way communication that solicits feedback from participants*

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## Dallas SRT Assistant Team Leader



# Lessons Learned: Debriefing

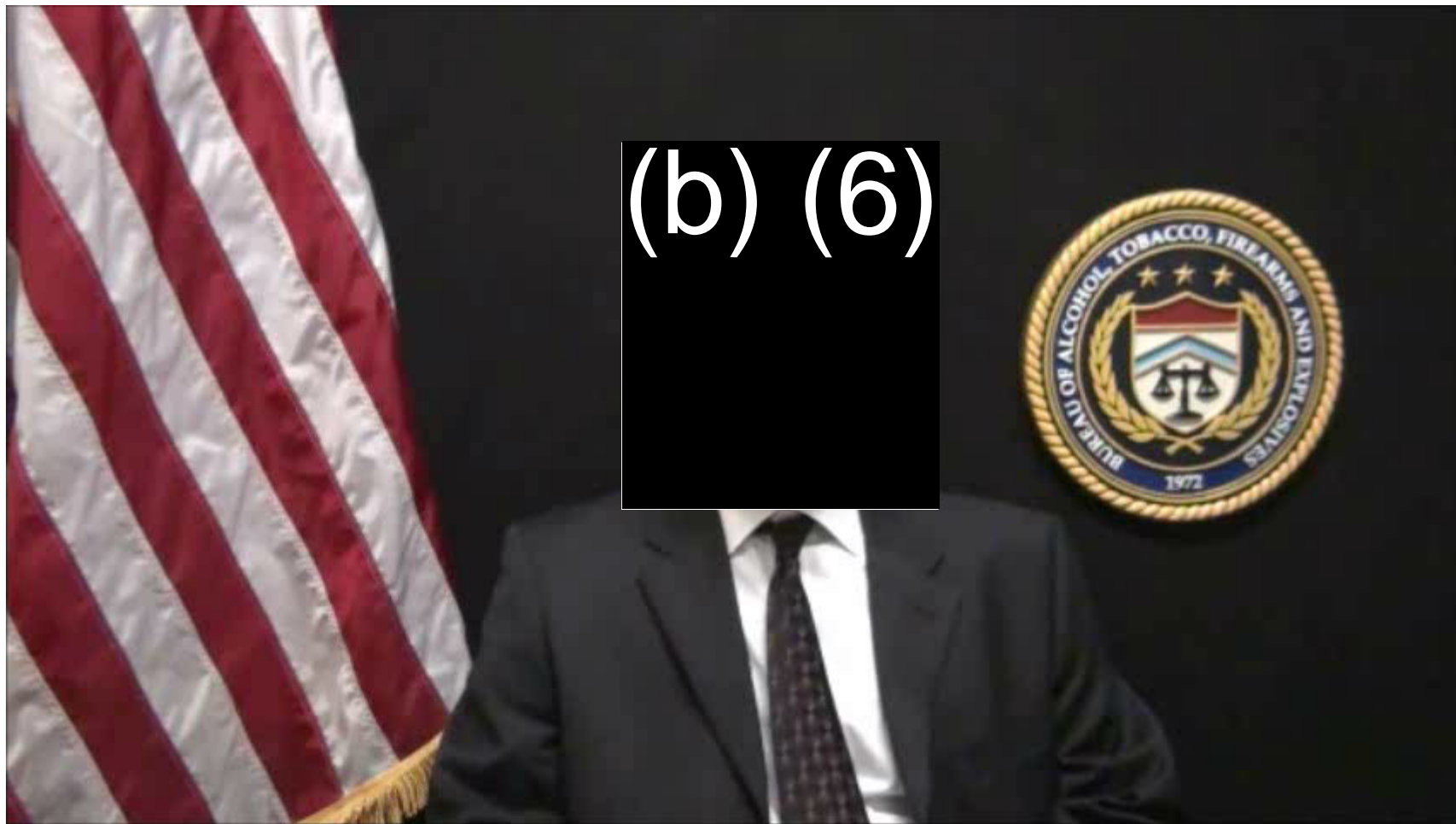
- *A timely debriefing should take place after all operations to ensure accurate information is obtained*
- *A repository of debriefings should be developed so others can learn from past incidents*

# Peer Support

- It was not until approximately one year after the raid that ATF arranged for agents to get together near Washington, DC to discuss their experiences
- Some agents informally coped with the tragedy by talking and sharing their experiences with other agents
- Many agents found it frustrating that they were prohibited from sharing their experiences with anyone outside of ATF

(b) (6)

# Houston SRT



# Lessons Learned: Peer Support

- *Peer and family support should be among the highest priorities following a traumatic event.*
- *It should be MANDATORY for agents involved in a traumatic incident to receive a professional evaluation and follow-up peer support*
- *Policy must be mandatory and implemented consistently to remove any stigma of seeking or receiving assistance*



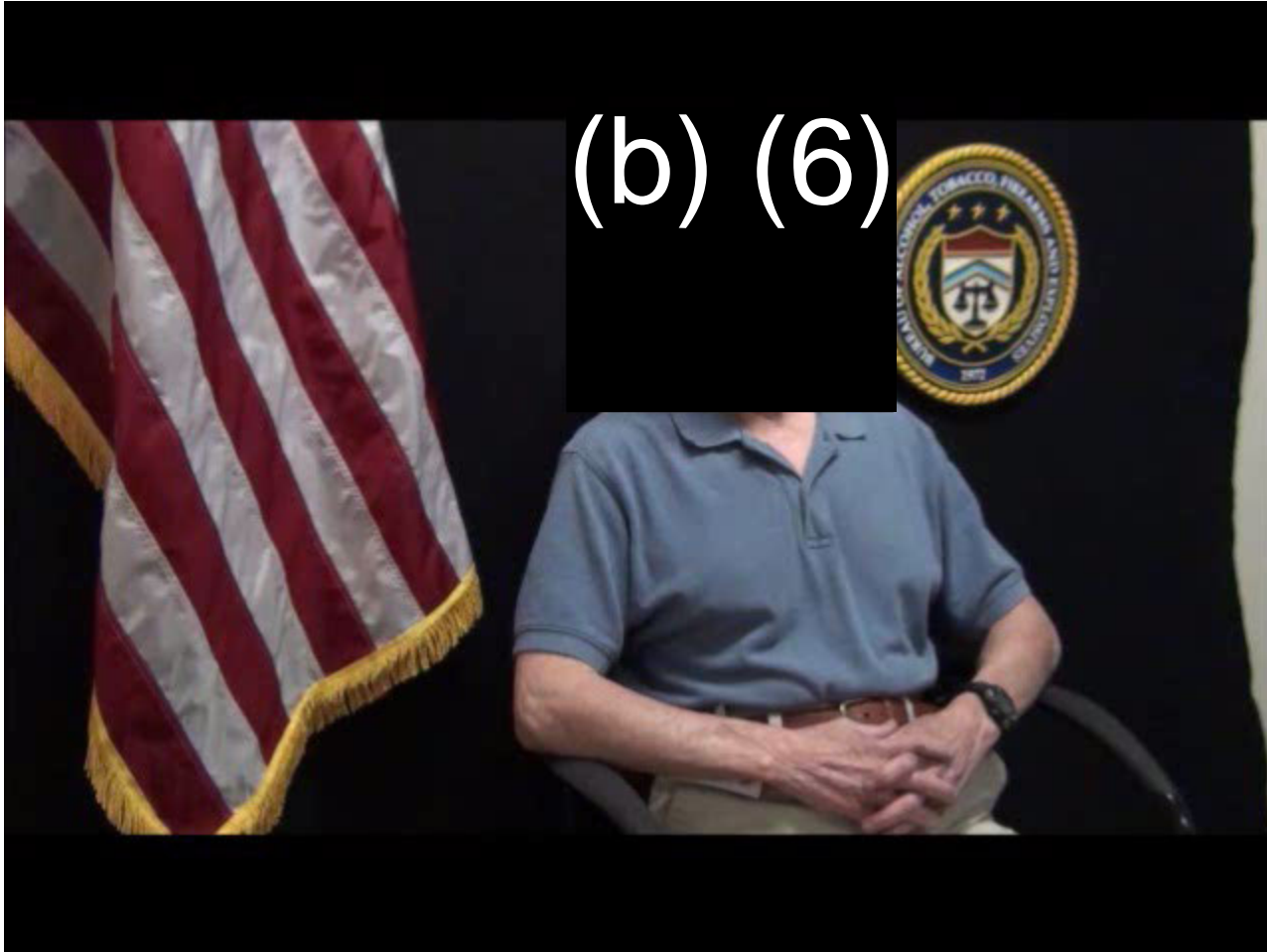
# Handling the Media

- PIOs did not receive extensive training—it was usually a collateral duty. Training was occasionally available at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC), but this was sporadic, when there were enough people to fill a class.



(b) (6)

# Logistics Coordinator



(b) (6)

# Lessons Learned: Handling the Media

- *Be prepared to address the media by bringing in briefed, well trained, emotionally uninvolved PIOs*
- *Ensure there is a determined effort to learn the facts of any incident in order to convey accurate, objective information to the public*

# ATF Public Statements

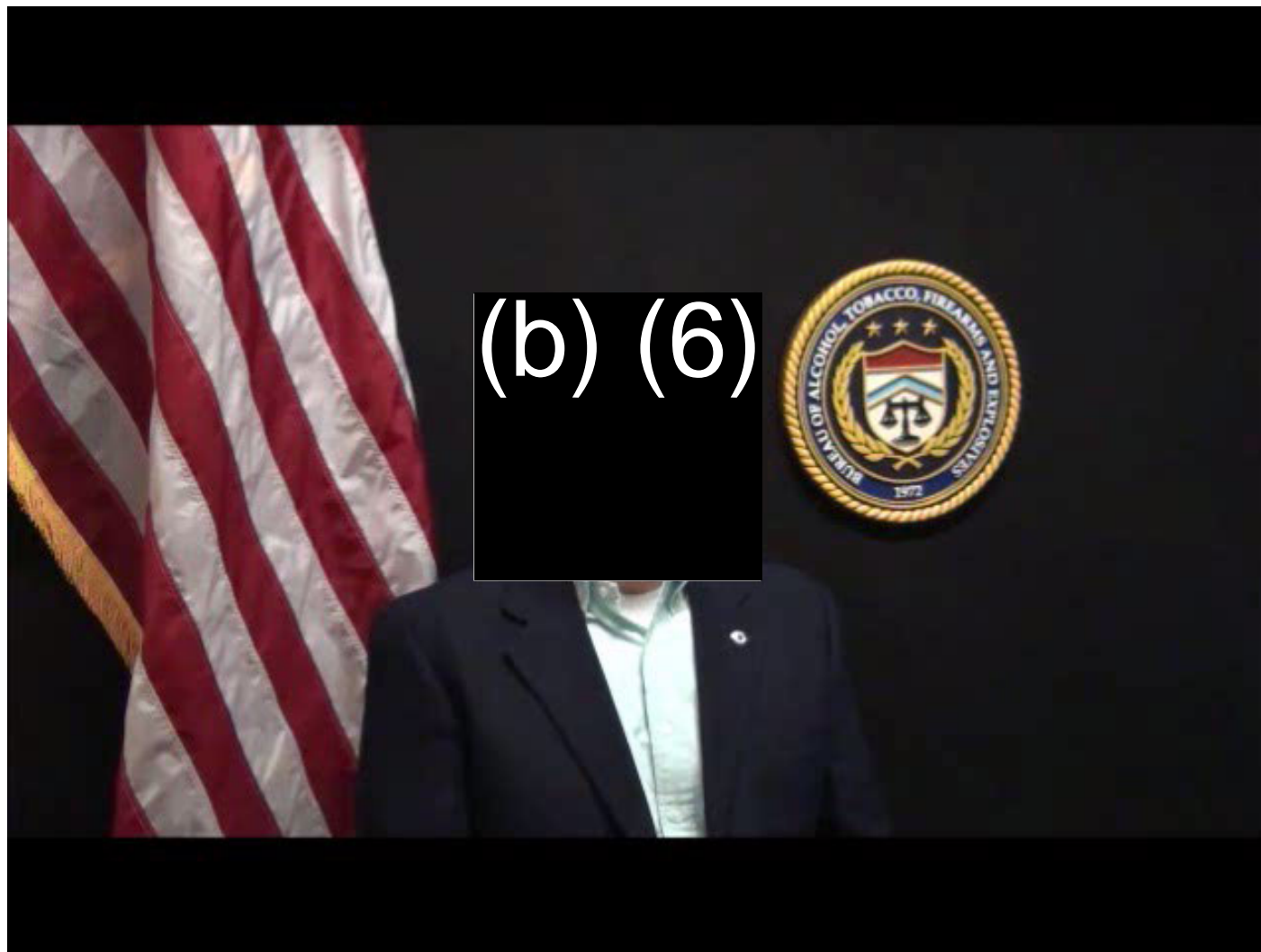
- When the higher ranking officials from the ATF did make statements in front of the national media, agents interviewed assert that they were not truthful about all aspects of the raid.

# ATF Public Statements

- For press releases the information came from the SACs. The information was limited to the number of deaths and injuries, while avoiding other questions.
- A decision was made to avoid releasing the fact that the element of surprise was lost.

(b) (6)

# Raid Team Member



# Lessons Learned: Leadership

*Candor, and the appearance of candor, is important for maintaining the trust and support of outside constituencies as well as the respect of the Agency's agents*

# Pete Mastin, New Orleans SAC and Deputy Incident Commander



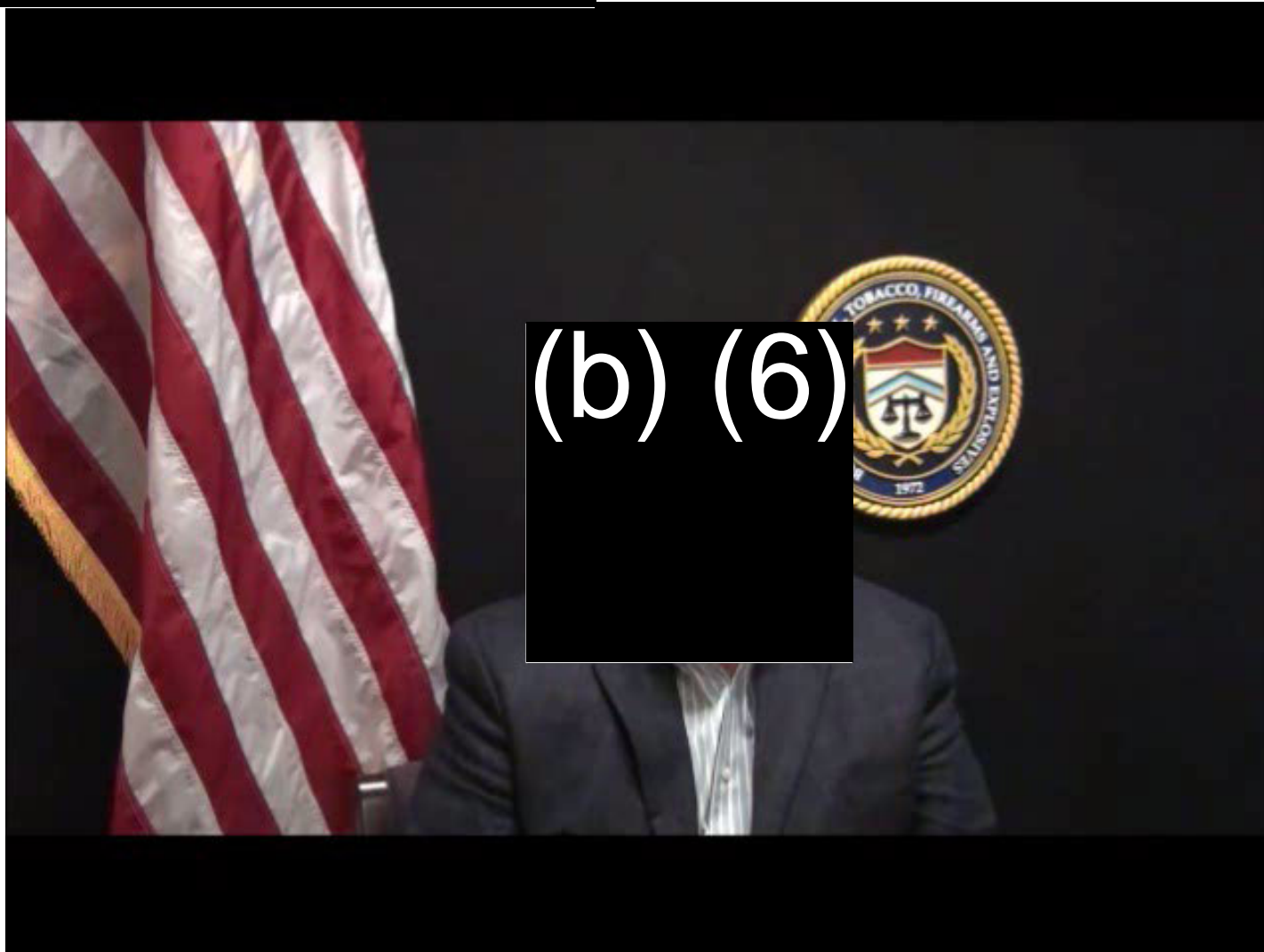


# Exercise #1 Continued

- Identification of Additional Lessons Learned
- Recap/Summary:
  - Operational Planning
  - Tactical Intelligence
  - Incident Command and Communication
  - Logistics and Medical Care
  - Family Notifications
  - Debriefings and Peer Support
  - Handling of the Media

(b) (6)

## Dallas SRT



# Summary

- Lessons learned
- Learning objectives
- Student evaluation

# Questions and Discussion



# Remembering WACO

Play ▶

