

The Lessons of Waco

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April 19 was the 28th anniversary of one of the most shameful episodes in modern American history: the massacre of 76 innocent men, women, and children by agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) in a military-style assault on the Branch Davidian compound in Waco, Texas.

The assault followed a botched raid on the Davidian compound (staged at a time that it would distract attention from an ATF sexual harassment scandal) and a two-month standoff between the Davidians and the agency. The ATF used CS tear gas against the Davidians, even though the gas was banned by an international treaty the US agreed to just months before the assault. So, if the assault had occurred on foreign soil as part of a military operation, it would have been a war crime.

Waco illustrates the dangers to our lives and liberties posed by a hyper-interventionist foreign policy. Eventually the deadly tools of the military-industrial complex will be brought home and used against US citizens.

In the 28 years since Waco, the military-industrial complex's role in domestic law enforcement has grown. This is largely thanks to the Section 1033 program that provides military-grade equipment to local law enforcement. The people will not be safe from militarized law enforcement until Section 1033 is repealed and the military-industrial complex is dismantled.

The initial raid on the Branch Davidian compound was justified by claims the Davidians were violating unconstitutional gun

laws. Infringements on the Second Amendment empower the federal police state. This is one reason why all those who value liberty must oppose all gun control laws, such as those currently being advocated by President Joe Biden and his congressional allies.

Last week, the ATF helped further Biden's anti-Second Amendment agenda by issuing a proposed regulation regarding pistols fitted with stabilizers, thus allowing the agency to harass more gun owners.

Also last week, the Department of Justice unveiled model red flag legislation to encourage more states to adopt these laws. Red flag laws allow law enforcement to seize an individual's firearms based on an allegation the individual may turn violent. Not surprisingly, allowing police to show up at a person's home and demand he surrender his firearms can lead to violence. Expanding red flag laws will violate Americans' Second Amendment rights, disregard due process, and lead to police being in more violent encounters.

David Chipman, President Biden's nominee to head the ATF, is a former ATF agent turned gun control lobbyist. Mr. Chipman is an outspoken defender of the ATF's actions at Waco. In addition to supporting red flag laws, he wants the ATF to arrest Americans who cannot buy a firearm because they failed a federal background check. The background check produces many false positives. Chipman's proposal would lead to the arresting of many innocent Americans. This would not bother Chipman since he told the Senate Judiciary Committee that law-abiding gun owners are potential criminals.

The Waco massacre is proof that, as the late libertarian Karl Hess put it, "whenever you put your faith in big government for any reason, sooner or later you end up an apologist for mass murder." Those of us who understand this must continue to spread the truth about the true nature of the welfare-warfare-regulatory state. Key to regaining our liberty is making

government officials abide by the same rules against the initiation of violence that apply to private citizens.

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