

ABC NEWS.COM POLL: Waco – 9/12/99

EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE AFTER 6:30 p.m. Monday, Sept. 13, 1999

Most Suspect a Waco Cover-up

Most Americans believe the FBI intentionally covered up its actions during the Branch Davidian standoff in Waco, Texas, six years ago. But given current information, relatively few think it should cost Attorney General Janet Reno her job.

In the aftermath of the FBI's disclosure that potentially incendiary tear gas canisters were used at Waco, 57 percent in an ABC News poll think the bureau "has been intentionally trying to cover up its actions" there. Just 23 percent believe its previous denials were an honest mistake, as the FBI has maintained.

FBI's actions:	9/12/99
Honest mistake	23%
Intentional cover-up	57

Twenty percent think the disclosure should cost Reno, the nation's chief law enforcer, her job. But the public gives Reno less than a ringing endorsement: While 34 percent say she should remain in office, 46 percent don't know enough yet to say.

PARTISANS - There's a good deal of political partisanship in views of Reno. Thirty-five percent of Republicans think she should resign; that falls to 18 percent of independents and 10 percent of Democrats. Several congressional Republicans, led by Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, R-Miss., have said she should go.

Men are more critical of Reno – 27 percent think she should resign, while just 14 percent of women agree. Women are much more apt to have no opinion, which simply could mean they haven't been following the story as closely.

AND NON-PARTISANS – In contrast to Reno's case, there are no political divisions when it comes to the FBI: A cover-up is suspected by similar majorities of Republicans (59 percent), Democrats (55 percent) and independents (59 percent) alike.

The use of incendiary rounds, denied by the FBI and Justice Department for years, came to light last month in documents turned over to lawyers representing Waco survivors. Reno last week appointed former Sen. John Danforth of Missouri to investigate.

METHODOLOGY - This ABC News.com survey was conducted by telephone Sept. 8-12, 1999, among a random national sample of 1,008 adults. The results have a three-point error margin. Fieldwork by ICR-International Communications Research of Media, Pa.

Analysis by Gary Langer.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com on the Internet at:

<http://www.abcnews.com/sections/us/PollVault/PollVault.html>

10. Because of recent disclosures about what happened during the standoff at the Branch Davidian compound in Waco, Texas, in 1993, do you think Attorney General Janet Reno should resign her job, or should she remain in office, or don't you know enough about it to say?

	Resign	Remain	Don't know/No opinion
9/12/99	20	34	46

11. The FBI now says it used potentially flammable tear gas canisters near the compound in Waco a few hours before the fire there. Before now the FBI said it did not do this. Do you think the FBI has been intentionally trying to cover up its actions at Waco, or do you think it made an honest mistake when it denied using flammable devices there?

	Cover-up	Mistake	No opinion
9/12/99	57	23	21