

# Leader: Cult 'ready for war'

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Several Abrams tanks have been sent to the Branch Davidian compound after reports that the cult may have explosives capable of damaging the Bradley vehicles, above, being used around the compound.

AP

## Members fortifying compound, FBI says

By Chuck Lindell  
American-Statesman Staff

Branch Davidian leader David Koresh has tried to provoke surrounding officers into launching a massive gunbattle in an apparent attempt to fulfill his end-of-the-world prophecies, an FBI official said Monday.

"He has made such statements as, 'We are ready for war. Let's get it on. Your talk is becoming in vain. I'm going to give you the opportunity to save yourselves before you get blown away,'" FBI agent Bob Ricks said.

The taunts have been accompanied by more ominous signs, including Branch Davidians pointing automatic weapons through slots newly cut into walls and indications that cult members are fortifying the Mount Carmel compound, he said.

Nine days after the standoff began and a day after surrender negotiations broke down, Ricks gave the bleakest assessment yet about the future of the siege at the religious compound 10 miles east of Waco.

"Throughout discussions with Koresh, he has indicated he has been prepared for this confrontation since 1985 and that he has stockpiled extensive arms and ammunition," Ricks said.

"It's our belief that he believes his prophecies will be fulfilled if the government engages in an all-out firefight with him in which he is executed. He has indicated he would be most pleased if we would engage in a gunbattle with him," the agent said.

Ricks also said the Defense Department sent several Abrams tanks to ring the compound in response to reports that Koresh may have explosives or rockets capable of damaging the armored Bradley Fighting Vehicles being used



Staff photo by Larry Kolvoord  
Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms agents found ammunition they say belongs to the Branch Davidians in a building outside the compound.

Austin officer providing high-tech help in investigation. **A4**

around Mount Carmel.

"He has indicated to us he has sufficient firepower to blow up the Bradley vehicles, and in fact his words were, 'We can cause those vehicles to go 40 or 50 feet into the air,'" Ricks said.

The 67-ton tanks will not be armed and will be used for defensive purposes, he said.

Though authorities say they have no plans to overrun the compound — "We would be playing right into his hands," Ricks said — they fear Koresh may force them into a fight.

Those who have studied fringe **See Cult, A4**



