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More children released, leader delays surrender

By Robert Davis
USA TODAY

WACO, Texas — As many as 15 followers of David Koresh may have died in gun battles at the Branch Davidians' heavily-armed compound here, news reports say.

The standoff headed into a fourth day after standoff leader Koresh promised Tuesday to surrender — then reneged.

He said he would "come out peacefully" after his 58-minute taped statement aired.

Radio stations across the country played the tape. CNN broadcast portions of it.

"I'm sure you're all aware of how I'm involved in a very serious thing right now," Koresh said. "I am really concerned about the lives of my brethren here and . . . about the lives of all those in this world."

Within minutes of the broadcast's start, officials edged closer with military vehicles.

Four agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms died in Sunday's battle.

Authorities earlier said one child inside the compound and one adult had died.

Children released from the compound say at least seven people were killed in the raid to serve warrants for firearms violations against Koresh.

The Associated Press reported 10 sect members dead and up to 40 wounded. *The Houston Chronicle* reported up to 15 died. About 75 members are believed inside the compound.

Also Tuesday:

▶ Eight more children were released, bringing to 18 the number released to the state.

▶ Prosecutors who unsuccessfully tried Koresh and his followers for a 1987 shootout with rival sect leader George Roden criticized federal agents for storming the compound.

The siege "was a vulgar display of power on the part of the feds being met with fear and paranoia on the part of the Davidians," said former McLennan County District Attorney Vic Feazell.

▶ Numerous weapons seized during the 1987 shootout — and returned to the sect because they were legal — probably were used in the gun battle, said El-Hadi Shabazz, who prosecuted the case.