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NATIONAL MARKET COVERAGE**TRANSCRIPT**

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GORDON PETERSON: Federal law enforcement was in the bull's-eye this week. We heard of a possible cover-up at the FBI. Justice is investigating whether an FBI official destroyed documents about the Bureau's raid on white separatist Randy Weaver and the killing of Weaver's wife in Idaho in 1992. And also this week, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms conceded that several of its agents attended a racist gathering in Tennessee in May. And now the revelations come just as Congress is about to re-open an investigation on the federal raid at Waco and Ruby Ridge, the location of the assault on Randy Weaver's house.

Carl, you talked with the head of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, and he concedes that agents attended the meeting in Tennessee, right?

CARL ROWAN [Syndicated columnist]: Yes.

PETERSON: What were they doing?

ROWAN: At least 20. Well, this started out in '80 as just a family outing. It deteriorated into a drunken brawl where they got thrown out of the national forest. Then it became nothing but an orgy of racism. And one retired ATF agent organized this. But at this affair where agents of the FBI, the CIA, the DEA, North Carolina, Tennessee law enforcement people, even policemen from Canada.

So this event was just the tip of a dunghill that says something about every law enforcement agency. They all have a problem with racism.

PETERSON: Wow. And were any of these people providing intelligence, or it was just a party?

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ROWAN: Well, you know, the interesting thing is the intelligence came from one of those militias, which is the larger picture. There's a campaign now to really try to destroy the ATF and FBI because of Waco. So you've got some guys crying crocodile tears about racism in Tennessee, but their goal is not to wipe out the racism. It's to wipe out the ATF.

CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER [Syndicated columnist]: Well, that's what's interesting here is that the charges against ATF and FBI with Waco and Ruby Ridge have, of course, nothing to do with race, because the people who were attacked were all white. But it is an attack really, in a sense, out of nowhere. I mean it's an attack that was unexpected in the midsts of other attacks on the ATF and the FBI, which I think is going to make it very hard for them in the future.

PETERSON: What's the bigger issue here, Jodie, in terms of....?

JODIE ALLEN [The Washington Post]: Well, the bigger issue is whether we can clean up these law enforcement agencies that seem to need it. Clearly, if anything at the moment, they seem to be doing the amazing job of uniting the far left and the far right in hatred for federal law enforcement. But at the same time, there does appear to be reasons to think that there should be more investigation, that there were cover-ups, that there was behavior that did perhaps violate the law even, and that there's a need for some of these hearings and some internal reforms.

PETERSON: Now how does this affect the White House, Doyle?

DOYLE McMANUS [Los Angeles Times]: Well, Bill Clinton and his people are terribly worried that these hearings are just going to play into the hands of the Republican right and of the militia movement and are going to legitimize some of the charges.

I happen to think they've come down on the wrong foot by being very defensive and saying "We don't have any reason for new hearings," because there are a lot of questions out in the country about Waco and about Ruby Ridge, even if they may be unfounded. I think they ought to go ahead and say "We welcome more openness here."

PETERSON: Meanwhile you've got the NRA playing a hand here.

KRAUTHAMMER: Yes. But whenever you have hearings of any kind, you always invite conspiracy theorists and wackos on all sides. When we had Iran-contra, it engendered all kinds of conspiracy theorists, and it makes the government look bad. But that's what investigations are about, and Congress has a duty to do

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that.

ROWAN: You know, last week we were talking about Rubin's concern that this would redound to the detriment of law enforcement, and et cetera....

PETERSON: And Secretary of the Treasury Rubin is the head of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.

ROWAN: That is exactly right. And I took the position that I can see nothing coming out of this that doesn't hurt law enforcement people.

But I must say the law enforcement agencies make it very easy. I mean you had these New York cops coming to Washington, sliding naked down the bannister in the hotel. New York can find only six cops that they can charge with anything.

You got this ATF orgy in the hills of Tennessee. I mean we've got to ask better than this of the law enforcement agencies.

PETERSON: What about this FBI cover-up, or alleged cover-up? Is this going to harm Director Freeh?

ALLEN: Oh, yeah, it sure does look like it will. Of course, again, it's Mr. Potts, who....

PETERSON: The number two man.

ALLEN: The number two man, very inadvisedly appointed to that position only in the last few months after a lot of this was known. It does look like there was a cover-up in terms of the Ruby Ridge engagement.

KRAUTHAMMER: And what's odd here is that the administration has shot itself in the foot, because, after all, Ruby Ridge happened in '92....

PETERSON: This is the attack that killed Randy Weaver's wife.

ALLEN: Right.

KRAUTHAMMER: It happened under the Bush administration. So it wouldn't have involved the Clinton administration, except for the fact that the man who was in charge of that operation, Larry Potts, who was reprimanded in an internal investigation, was then appointed by Freeh as his number two, which was a rather astonishing thing to do at the time. There was a lot of opposition. And I think it's going to come out and really hurt them.

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McMANUS: And I think what's going to be, in a way, most painful for the Clinton administration here is that up until now the Attorney General, Janet Reno, and the FBI Director, Louie Freeh, have been stars in this administration. They've had a lot of public confidence. Now their judgments are on the line.

ROWAN: Can I say just one little controversial thing? Lyndon Johnson knew these law enforcement agencies had all these elements. And one of the things driving him to affirmative action was his knowledge that these elements tried to keep certain people out. They tried to insure that they never got promoted. And people who want to change them had better rethink affirmative action.

PETERSON: When we come back, what Bosnia says about the United States and its political and moral leadership.....

[End of references to law enforcement and intelligence agencies.]