

Film on Waco hits roadblock

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AUSTIN — The company behind the upcoming feature film Waco said this week at the Cannes Film Festival that the Texas Film Commission denied its application for tax incentives meant to encourage more filming in Texas, causing the company to halt plans for a \$30 million project in the state.

Bob Hudgins, director of the Texas Film Commission, told the Austin American-Statesman in Wednesday editions that the movie was denied incentives because of factual inaccuracies in the script, which deals with the federal raid on the Branch Davidian compound near Waco in 1993.

Under a statute passed by the Legislature in 2007, projects that put Texas in a negative light can be denied incentives.

Waco is the first film Hudgins has rejected under the provision. He said he reads about 30 feature film scripts each year.

“It’s not censorship at all,” Hudgins said. “After reading the Waco script, I did some fact checking and feel very confident in the checking I did. ... This project steps outside an accurate portrayal of those events.”

Accusations

While attending the Cannes festival, Emilio Ferrari and Tara Wood, executives at Los Angeles-based Entertainment 7, said Hudgins had bowed to pressure from politicians.

Hudgins denied that, saying the decision was exclusively his.

Ferrari said the script is not inaccurate and does not portray Texas in a negative light.

“It’s not a movie about Texas,” he said. “It’s about an incident that happened there, but it could have happened anywhere.”

Wood said that the film would focus on miscommunication with federal agencies coordinating the standoff and eventual assault.

“We did years of research on this project, and there’s nothing inaccurate in the script,” Ferrari said. “We have not been told of any specific inaccuracies, and I’d really like to know.”

Hudgins wouldn’t specify what’s inaccurate, though he said the people he talked to, whom he declined to identify, said the script is off-base.

Wood said the real issue is censorship and artistic freedom.

“Other filmmakers will not want to come to Texas if they have to get script approval first from the state — and if that approval can be subject to political pressure,” Wood said.