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press@grassley.senate.gov

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For Immediate Release

Thursday, June 12, 2003

Grassley Again Concerned About FBI Investigation Against Whistleblower

WASHINGTON — Sen. Chuck Grassley and Sen. Patrick Leahy today wrote to FBI Director Robert Mueller to express concern about an internal investigation of Agent Robert Wright of the Chicago Division.

Wright has previously spoken publicly about problems with the FBI's counter-terrorism efforts, particularly in the area of terrorist financing. Since raising concerns about the FBI both internally and publicly in 2001, Wright has been the subject of three investigations by the Office of Professional Responsibility (OPR), the FBI's internal affairs unit. He was cleared of any wrongdoing in all three previous investigations. The latest OPR probe focuses on Agent Wright speaking to the media last week.

"The FBI should worry more about catching terrorists than gagging its own agents," Grassley said. "Suppressing free speech is not the way to reform the FBI. Director Mueller has pledged to be open to criticism, so I hold him to his word."

Here is the letter to Director Mueller.

June 12, 2003

The Honorable Robert S. Mueller, III
Director
Federal Bureau of Investigation
935 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20535-0001

Dear Director Mueller:

We are writing to inquire about reports that the FBI's Office of Professional Responsibility (OPR) is conducting yet another internal investigation of Special Agent Robert Wright of the Chicago Division, in response to comments he made to the media last week regarding alleged lapses in FBI terrorist investigations. It is our understanding that OPR has conducted three investigations of Agent Wright, each beginning after Agent Wright raised questions and concerns – both internally and publicly – about problems with the FBI's counter-terrorism efforts. We also understand each investigation closed after it was determined that Agent Wright had not acted improperly.

We are troubled by the FBI's apparent haste to launch an OPR investigation every time an agent speaks publicly about problems within the FBI. This sort of knee-jerk reaction manifests an insecurity and weakness that is dangerous for such an important agency in the war on terrorism, and is certain to have a

chilling effect on other FBI employees who want to fix problems, or even make their supervisors aware of problems, within the FBI. With the FBI it has been "hear no evil, speak no evil but, above all, tell no evil." As you have repeatedly stated, the FBI needs to be open to criticism, because it can help the FBI improve.

In sum, we ask you to ensure that the FBI proceeds with caution and forethought in its treatment of Agent Wright, keeping in mind the message it is sending to other agents. Also, please make the appropriate officials available to brief interested Committee staff on the circumstances surrounding this matter. FBI officials should contact John Drake at (202) 224-4515, or Sandra Wilkinson at (202) 224-7821, to arrange the briefing.

I thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Charles E. Grassley	Patrick Leahy
Member	Ranking Member

cc: The Honorable Orrin Hatch
Chairman

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