

F.B.I. Agent Suing Bureau for Barring Book on Terror

By JUDITH MILLER NY Times 5/12/02

WASHINGTON, May 10 — An F.B.I. agent has sued the bureau for refusing to let him publish a book about what he says were **botched efforts to investigate fund-raising by Hamas and other militant Islamic networks in the United States in the 1990's.**

In a complaint filed Thursday in Federal District Court in Washington, Robert G. Wright Jr., an agent in Chicago, accused the bureau of trying to muzzle him about his efforts to investigate possible fund-raising for terrorist attacks.

Mr. Wright says he was not permitted to pursue a Chicago-based investigation called Vulgar Betrayal into Hamas and nonprofit groups in the United States that, he believes, were being used to "recruit, organize, train and support Hamas terrorist operatives and to plan and carry out terrorist attacks."

The complaint represents an unusual public protest by an F.B.I. agent and offers a glimpse of disagreements within the bureau over how to pursue such investigations before Sept. 11. In the complaint, Mr. Wright says he was not permitted to pursue a criminal case because the bureau was more concerned about secretly collecting intelligence on the fund-raising groups.

Justice Department officials strongly denied Mr. Wright's accusations, saying the bureau spent many thousands of hours and hundreds of thousands of dollars investigating Hamas. They said that though Mr. Wright's part of the investigation was closed, it had become part of a "national counterterrorism investigation, which is ongoing."

F.B.I. officials are not permitted to publish or reveal information from investigatory files without the bureau's written permission.

In a letter to Mr. Wright, John E. Collingwood of the bureau's Office of Public and Congressional Affairs wrote today that a book Mr. Wright wanted to publish involved "an open investigation, matters occurring before a federal grand jury, sensitive law enforcement techniques, intelligence information, and other material otherwise prohibited from disclosure." Mr. Collingwood said Mr. Wright was forbidden to publish the book or to discuss it with The New York Times.

Mr. Wright's investigation led to the seizure in June 1998 of \$1.4 million in the bank accounts of Mohammed Salah of Chicago, who had been in an Israeli prison after being convicted of helping to recruit and train for Hamas. Investigators said they traced Mr. Salah's bank transactions to specific terrorist attacks, including one in which an Israeli soldier was killed.

The action against Mr. Salah was the first use of the civil forfeiture laws to seize alleged terrorist assets in the United States. Mr. Salah said later that he was tortured by the Israelis into confessing to a crime he did not commit, and he has filed a lawsuit challenging the legality of the seizure.

In his complaint, Mr. Wright said the funds were linked to Yassin Qadi, a Saudi businessman, whom the federal government designated last October as a financial supporter of Osama bin Laden. Mr. Qadi has denied links to terrorists.

Edit Note: The plot thickens. The FBI becomes more involved in the incompetant investigation of the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center. Time after time, investigation after investigation, the FBI empty suits in Washington DC, ignored plea after plea from the ground level FBI troops. When will the FBI learn that law enforcement is not a political job -- it's deadly serious protection of America.....

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