

FBI Raids Activists' Homes in Sinister COINTELPRO Replay

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Global Research, September 27, 2010

[Antifascist Calling...](#) 26 September 2010

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Intelligence](#), [Police State & Civil Rights](#)

In a replay of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's infamous [COINTELPRO](#) operations targeting the left during the 1960s and '70s, America's political police launched raids on the homes of antiwar and solidarity activists.

Heavily-armed SWAT teams smashed down doors and agents armed with search warrants carried out simultaneous raids in Minneapolis and Chicago early morning on September 24.

Rummaging through personal belongings, agents carted off boxes of files, documents, books, letters, photographs, computers and cell phones from Minneapolis antiwar activists Mick Kelly, Jessica Sundin, Meredith Aby, two others, as well as the office of that city's Anti-War Committee.

Meanwhile, as federal snoops seized personal property in Minneapolis, FBI agents raided the Chicago homes of activists Stephanie Weiner and Joseph Iosbaker. According to the [Chicago Tribune](#), "neighbors saw FBI agents carrying boxes from the apartment of community activist Hatem Abudayyeh, executive director of the Arab American Action Network."

"In addition," the *Tribune* reported, "Chicago activist Thomas Burke said he was served a grand jury subpoena that requested records of any payments to Abudayyeh or his group."

Amongst those targeted by the FBI were individuals who organized peaceful protests against the imperialist invasion and occupation of Iraq and 2008 protests at the far-right Republican National Convention in St. Paul, Minnesota.

As *Antifascist Calling* reported in [2008](#) and [2009](#), citing documents published by the whistleblowing web site [WikiLeaks](#), state and local police, the FBI and agencies such as the Department of Homeland Security, the Pentagon's Northern Command (NORTHCOM), the United States Secret Service, the National Security Agency and the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency implemented an action plan designed to monitor and squelch dissent during the convention.

As part of that plan's execution, activists and journalists were preemptively arrested, and cameras, recording equipment, computers and reporters' confidential notes were seized. Demonstrations were broken up by riot cops who wielded batons, pepper spray and tasers and attacked peaceful protesters who had gathered to denounce the war criminals' conclave in St. Paul.

With Friday's raids, the federal government under "change" huckster Barack Obama, has

taken their repressive program to a whole new level, threatening activists with the specter of being charged with providing “material support of terrorism.” A felony conviction under this draconian federal law ([Title 18, Part I, Chapter 113B, § 2339B](#)) carries a 15 year prison term.

State-Corporate Nexus

The trend by federal, state and corporate securocrats to situate antiwar and international solidarity activism along a bogus “terrorism continuum,” is an alarming sign that plans for building an American police state are well underway as I pointed out in my 2008 [analysis](#) of the FBI’s “Counterterrorism Analytical Lexicon.”

Recently, the secrecy-spilling web site [Public Intelligence](#) posted 137 [bulletins](#) produced by the Institute of Terrorism Research and Response ([ITRR](#)), an American-Israeli company, under terms of a \$125,000 contract to the Pennsylvania Office of Homeland Security.

Billing itself as “the preeminent Israeli/American security firm providing training, intelligence and education to clients across the globe,” ITRR is part of a large, but little understood nexus of “public-private partnerships” fusing state and corporate surveillance against leftists and environmentalists.

Amongst the targets of ITRR’s alarmist screeds were anti-drilling and environmental activists, permanent quarry for corporate spies and provocateurs, as the web site Green Is The New Red ([GNR](#)) amply documents.

Earlier this month, GNR [reported](#) that while ITRR and their political paymasters have been monitoring non-violent activists, “including a film screening of [Gasland](#),” Pennsylvania’s *heimat* security boss James Powers wrote in an email that his office intended to “continue providing this support to the Marcellus Shale Formation natural gas stakeholders while not feeding those groups fomenting dissent against those same companies.”

In the bizarre parallel universe inhabited by Powers and his Israeli cohorts, anti-drilling activists are “ecoterrorists,” while the mass-murdering neo-Nazi mastermind of the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing that killed 168 people including 19 children, Timothy McVeigh, was “just a person very angry with the U.S. government.”

While corporate polluters and criminals get a free pass from the federal government and an anti-Muslim and anti-Arab crusade is in full-swing, stoked by right-wing goons and their media shills, it is little wonder then, that Friday’s raids targeted supporters of the Palestinian solidarity movement.

Neo-McCarthyite Witchhunt

With a pretext that the raids were seeking “evidence related to an ongoing Joint Terrorism Task Force investigation,” FBI spokesperson Steve Warfield told [The New York Times](#) that repressors are “looking at activities connected to the material support of terrorism.”

Attorney Ted Dooley who represents Mick Kelly, a union- and socialist activist targeted by the Bureau told the *Times* that the SWAT team broke down Kelly’s door at 7 a.m. on Friday and served a search warrant on his companion.

According to Dooley, the warrant claimed the secret state was searching for “evidence” that

activist groups had provided “material support” to “Hezbollah, the Popular Front for Liberation of Palestine and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia.”

Dooley told the [Minneapolis Star-Tribune](#) that the raids are nothing less than “a probe into the political beliefs of American citizens and any organization anywhere that opposes the American imperial design.”

The *political* nature of the raids was blatantly transparent. A copy of the [search warrant](#) on Kelly’s home obtained by Twin Cities Independent Media Center ([TC-IMC](#)) revealed that the order, signed by U.S. Magistrate Judge Susan Nelson specified that Kelly’s membership in the Freedom Road Socialist Organization ([FRSO](#)) was a primary motive behind the Bureau’s home invasion.

The warrant allowed the FBI to take “documents, files, books, photographs, videos, souvenirs, war relics, notebooks, address books, diaries, journals, maps, or other evidence, including evidence in electronic form relating to Kelly’s travels to and from and presence and activities in Minnesota and other foreign countries, to which Kelly has traveled as part of his work for FRSO.”

Reprising the red-hunting frenzy of the McCarthy period at the height of the Cold War, the warrant specifies that the Bureau was authorized by Obama’s Justice Department to seize material relating to “the recruitment, indoctrination, and facilitation of other individuals in the United States to join FRSO, including materials related to the identity and location of recruiters, facilitators, and recruits, the means by which the recruits were recruited to join FRSO, the means by which the recruitment was financed and arranged.”

In other words, with a bogus “terrorism investigation” as a pretext, the Obama regime is targeting socialist political groups for destruction in order for Democrats to whip-up “War on Terror” and anticommunist hysteria prior to November general elections that may see Congress pass into the hands of the troglodytic Republican faction of war criminals and corporatists.

Grand Jury Intimidation

In addition to turning over the homes of antiwar and solidarity activists in Illinois, Michigan and Minnesota, the FBI handed out subpoenas ordering individuals to appear before a federal grand jury that will convene next month in Chicago.

While the Bureau cannot compel citizens to answer their questions, administrative means can be used by the secret state to coerce testimony against fellow activists: the federal grand jury system.

As civil liberties scholar Frank Donner wrote in his groundbreaking book, *The Age of Surveillance*: “Federal grand juries, judicial bodies limited under our legal system to an accusatory role, were in the same way [as red-hunting congressional committees] taken over by the executive branch in the Nixon years and converted into intelligence instruments.”

Historically, federal grand juries have targeted dissident groups and individuals as an harassment and intimidation tactic, particularly when activists and organizations challenged the government’s imperial adventures abroad and capitalist depredations at home.

Individuals subpoenaed by the state who refuse to answer questions posed by Star Chamber inquisitors can be receive an indeterminate jail sentence for failing to do so.

During the Nixon administration according to Donner, some one hundred grand juries subpoenaed more than one hundred thousand witnesses in a blatant attempt to silence New Left and antiwar groups; as well, members of the Catholic left and supporters of the African-American, Native American, Puerto Rican independence and women's liberation movements were similarly targeted.

While corporate media insist that the COINTELPRO-era disappeared with Nixon, FBI snoops throughout the 1980s, '90s down to the present moment have marked the left for destruction.

Recently, Bay Area Indymedia journalist Josh Wolf was jailed for 226 days in 2006-2007 by the U.S. District Court in San Francisco after refusing to turn over his raw, unedited video footage to the FBI in connection with the Bureau's alleged "arson investigation" against anti-G8 anarchist protests in 2005.

Wolf refused to comply with the subpoena, and National Lawyers Guild attorneys argued that to do so would have a "chilling effect" on journalists who covered future protests, effectively transforming reporters into an arm of the government. Their arguments failed to sway the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals and Wolf was imprisoned.

When Wolf was released from the Federal Corrections Institution in Dublin, California in 2007, he had been jailed longer than any other journalist for refusing to divulge sources or source materials.

Cover-Ups, Terror, Repression

Today, as the capitalist economic crisis deepens and the "War on Terror" morphs into a multiyear, multibillion dollar boondoggle engorging defense and security corporations with taxpayer-funded boodle, labor, environmental and socialist opponents are in the cross-hairs of the Obama administration, just as they were during the years of the criminal Bush regime.

Activists with diverse groups such as the Palestine Solidarity Group, Students for a Democratic Society, the Twin-Cities Anti-War Committee, the Colombia Action Network, the Freedom Road Socialist Organization, and the National Committee to Free Ricardo Palmera, a Colombian political prisoner, have now been targeted for "special handling" by Obama's Justice Department.

As the imperialist occupation project flies off the rails in Afghanistan, and as governments in Central and South America reject the capitalist "free trade" paradigm of militarism, hyperexploitation and resource extraction that benefit gifting North American multinationals and drug-money laundering banks, the repressive state is moving to shore-up its crumbling edifice here at home.

Friday's raids are all the more ironic, given the fact that just last week the Justice Department's own Office of the Inspector General ([OIG](#)) revealed that the Bureau had used false claims to launch "counterterror" investigations to justify covert spying and infiltration operations by provocateurs against activist groups across the country.

That report was a whitewash and largely exonerated the Bureau, clearing secret state agents of deliberate violations of their targets' civil rights and claimed that FBI snoops were motivated by a concern over "potential violence," not the leftist views expressed by U.S. policy opponents.

Although a cover-up, the OIG report disclosed new details of illegal FBI spying on an array of antiwar, Muslim, environmental and animal rights groups. Filled with mendacious characterizations designed as an alibi for "overzealous" agents, Inspector General Glenn A. Fine asserted that people were placed on terrorist watch lists because of "factually weak" evidence and that investigations were opened and continued "without adequate basis," not their opposition to imperialism or destruction of the environment.

The conduct by secret state repressors however, goes far beyond overzealousness. In the wake of the provocative 9/11 attacks, materially aided by the FBI's *own informant*, the al-Qaeda triple agent [Ali Mohamed](#), "terrorism" continues to serve as a pretext-and justification-for a domestic clampdown against organizations engaged in legal political activity guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution and is a key feature of Washington's "War on Terror" policies.

Parenthetically, [Fox News](#) reported Sunday that the Pentagon "has burned 9,500 copies of Army Reserve Lt. Col. Anthony Shaffer's memoir 'Operation Dark Heart,' his book about going undercover in Afghanistan."

"The Defense Intelligence Agency," the right-wing news outlet reports, "attempted to block key portions of the book that claim 'Able Danger' successfully identified hijacker Mohammed Atta as a threat to the United States before the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks."

According to Fox, "the DIA wanted references to a meeting between Lt. Col. Tony Shaffer, the book's author, and the executive director of the 9/11 Commission, Philip Zelikow, removed. In that meeting, which took place in Afghanistan, Shaffer alleges the commission was told about 'Able Danger' and the identification of Atta before the attacks. No mention of this was made in the final 9/11 report."

Undercover at the time, Shaffer recounted that there was "stunned silence" at the meeting after he told the executive director of the commission and others that Atta was identified as early as 2000 by 'Able Danger'."

While far-right terrorists are given *entrée* to the United States by secret state agencies to murder its own citizens, organizations targeted by the Bureau's blanket spying according to the Inspector General included Greenpeace, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, Catholic Worker and the Thomas Merton Center, a pacifist group dedicated to nonviolence. In one telling passage, Fine wrote, "in some cases, the FBI classified some investigations relating to nonviolent civil disobedience under its 'acts of terrorism' classification."

Given imperial assertions by the Bush and now, Obama regimes, that the Executive Branch, and it alone, has the authority to arrest and indefinitely detain anyone it so chooses without trial, on suspicion of "terrorism," categorizing nonviolent protesters as "terrorists" could lead to the seizure of individuals so designated and send them on a one-way trip to a military gulag such as Guantánamo Bay or even a CIA "black site."

In a [statement](#) commenting on the release of the OIG's report, Michael German, the

American Civil Liberties Union Senior Policy Counsel, and a former FBI whistleblower said:

“The FBI has a long history of abusing its national security surveillance powers, reaching back to the smear campaign waged by the American government against Dr. Martin Luther King. Americans peacefully exercising their First Amendment rights were able to become targets of FBI surveillance because spying guidelines that were established after the shameful abuses of the 60s and 70s were loosened in 2002. Unfortunately, they were loosened again in 2008, even after this abuse was uncovered.

“Unless the rules regulating the FBI are strengthened to safeguard the privacy of innocent Americans, we are all in danger of being spied on and added to terrorist watch lists for doing nothing more than attending a rally or holding up a sign.”

With the recent raids on activist homes, the Bureau has issued its unambiguous reply to the Inspector General and the American people.

In response, over 150 people attended a community meeting in Minneapolis Friday night “on less than six hours notice, to begin to respond to Friday morning’s FBI raids and subpoenas to local antiwar and international solidarity organizers,” the Twin Cities Independent Media Center [reported](#).

“Organizers,” according to TC-IMC, “also announced two upcoming events: a protest outside the Minneapolis FBI office, 111 Washington Ave. S., at 4:30pm on Monday; and a solidarity committee meeting on Thursday at 7pm, location to be determined. The subpoenas ask activists to appear before a grand jury in Chicago, where a solidarity vigil was held last night as a raid was still ongoing in that city, on or around October 19, reported a Chicago Indymedia post.”

Minnesota civil rights attorney Bruce Nestor told the [St. Paul Pioneer Press](#) that he was “profoundly troubled” by the raids. “Overwhelmingly they’re people who are doing public political organizing, so I think it’s shocking to have heavily armed federal agents show up at their homes. ... It’s all people involved in anti-war activity, and it appears to be focused largely on opposition to the U.S. policy in Colombia and Palestine.”

Nestor added. “This is a direct attack on people who are strong, dedicated advocates of freedom, of the right of people to be free from US domination. It is an attack upon anybody who organizes against US imperialism and US militarism abroad.”

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