

Claiming “material support of terrorism”

FBI raids homes of antiwar activists

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The FBI has confirmed that it carried out at least eight raids on the homes and offices of antiwar activists in Minneapolis and Chicago at 7 a.m. on Friday.

The FBI claimed to be seeking “evidence relating to activities concerning support of terrorism.” Though no arrests were made in the raids, subpoenas were issued to those targeted ordering them to appear before a Chicago grand jury on October 12. Federal agents confiscated computers and cell phones, in addition to thousands of documents, books, and letters.

There are as yet unconfirmed reports that other raids also took place in Michigan and North Carolina.

The raids, carried out under the auspices of the Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF), are a transparent attempt to intimidate political opponents of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. They come on the heels of a Justice Department inspector general’s report revealing massive police infiltration and spying on antiwar groups and other political dissenters in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. (See: “Report whitewashes FBI political spying”)

Among the groups evidently targeted are the Twin Cities Anti-War Committee, Students for a Democratic Society, Colombia Action Network, the Palestine Solidarity Group, the Freedom Road Socialist Organization, and possibly the Arab-American Action Network.

The FBI admitted the targeted individuals posed no danger and said it did not intend at this point to make arrests. “These were search warrants only,” said FBI agent Steve Warfield in Minneapolis. “We’re not anticipating any arrests at this time. They’re seeking evidence relating to activities concerning the material support of terrorism... There’s no imminent threat to the community.”

One of six warrants issued for raids in Minneapolis

was used to invade the home of Mick Kelly, who said agents kicked his door down and entered with guns drawn Friday morning. The warrant cited as its rationale Kelly’s ability to “pay for his own travel” to Colombia and Palestine, positing possible links to “foreign terrorist organizations including but not limited to FARC, PFLP, and Hezbollah.”

Kelly lives above the Hard Times Cafe in Minneapolis’ Cedar-Riverside neighborhood.

FARC is a nationalist, peasant-based organization at war with the US-backed regime in Colombia; the PFLP is the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a faction of the Palestine Liberation Organization, or PLO; and Hezbollah is a mass Islamic political party in Lebanon with a paramilitary wing that has fought off invasions by Israel.

The political nature of the raids was barely concealed. The warrant to raid Kelly’s home specifically cited his membership in a group calling itself socialist, the Freedom Road Socialist Organization (FRSO). Signed by US Magistrate Judge Susan Nelson at 3:30 p.m. Thursday, it 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,” according to an attorney representing Kelly.

Kelly evidently spoke with the Associated Press as his home was being searched. The AP reported the interview in the following way: “‘The FBI is harassing anti-war organizers and leaders, folks who opposed US intervention in the Middle East and Latin America,’ Kelly said before agents confiscated his cell phone.” Kelly said he was “absolutely not” involved in any

illegal activities.

Attorney Ted Dooley examined the search warrant used in the raid on Kelly's apartment. "It's a probe into the political beliefs of American citizens and to any organization anywhere that opposes the American imperial design," he commented.

Also targeted in the raid of his apartment, according to Dooley, are all of "Kelly's personal contacts in the United States and abroad, which means absolutely everybody that Kelly's ever been in contact with, anywhere. I'd say it's kind of unconstitutional and hideous, myself. It's very broad. It's disgusting."

Jessica Sundin, whose apartment was also invaded, described what took place. "At about 7 o'clock, I heard a banging at the door, and the FBI came in with six or seven agents... They wanted papers, computers, my cell phone, pictures, CDs." Sundin said her daughter was frightened by the raid.

The raids in Minnesota appeared to focus primarily on an organization called the Minnesota Anti-War Committee and its "opposition to US military aid to Colombia and Israel, as well as its opposition to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan," according to the AP. Numerous witnesses said that the office of the Anti-War Committee was also raided by the FBI.

Both Kelly and Sundin participated in organizing mass protests against the Republican National Convention held in St. Paul, Minnesota in 2008. Hundreds were arrested in police raids then, including eight anarchists who were charged with terrorism under Minnesota's version of the Patriot Act (See: "Political dissent as terrorism: 'Minnesota Patriot Act' charges filed against RNC Eight")

Also raided in Minneapolis early Friday were the homes of antiwar activists Meredith Aby and Anh Pham, as well as the home of Tracy Molm, a leader of Students for a Democratic Society at the University of Minnesota.

The two reported Chicago raids targeted the homes of antiwar and gay rights activist Andy Thayer and Tom Burke of the Colombia Action Network. According to Fox News of Chicago, one of the raids invaded a house "that property records link to the director of the Arab-American Action Network." Ross Rice, spokesman for the FBI, refused to provide details on what took place in Chicago.

"I'm really profoundly troubled by [the raids],"

attorney Bruce Nestor told the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*. "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."

The federal law prohibiting "material support of terrorism" was established in 1996 and "has been interpreted so broadly to really endanger the rights of US citizens to oppose the military and foreign policies of the United States," 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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