

FBI infiltrator prepared government raid on antiwar groups in Minneapolis and Chicago

Ron Jorgenson
26 January 2011

The Committee to Stop FBI Repression has revealed that a government agent infiltrated the Anti-War Committee (AWC) and later the Freedom Road Socialist Organization (FRSO) during a two-and-a-half year undercover operation leading up to the raids of activists' homes and offices on September 24, 2010. The raids, based on the bogus charge of providing "material support to designated foreign terrorist organizations," initiated a government crackdown that resulted in subpoenas requiring 23 activists appear before a federal grand jury in Chicago.

A January 12 statement posted on the AWC web site, stopfbi.net, revealed that an officer using the name Karen Sullivan had conducted undercover work against the organization. Prosecutors in the office of US Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald confirmed in discussions with lawyers representing some of the subpoenaed activists that Sullivan was an agent, according to the statement.

The revelation makes clear that the same sort of FBI sting operations used to entrap alleged terrorists are now being deployed against political organizations. It also demonstrates that the assault on democratic rights launched by the Bush administration in the name of "the war on terror" has only been deepened under Obama.

At a press conference, subpoenaed AWC and FRSO member Jess Sundin outlined how Sullivan had become involved during preparations for the legally permitted demonstrations at the 2008 Republican National Convention held in St. Paul, Minnesota. Sullivan worked her way up, chairing meetings, giving public speeches, and assisting with bookkeeping, in the process gaining access to membership lists and "unimpeded access to our financial records," said Sundin.

"On September 24th, federal agents burst into our homes and turned our lives upside down," said Sundin of the raids. At AWC offices in Minneapolis, FBI agents used the key that had been entrusted to Sullivan to enter, "seizing our computers, financial records and other materials."

While other AWC supporters rallied after the raids, "one person disappeared entirely," said Sundin, "a person we thought was a fellow activist and who had claimed to be our friend: Karen Sullivan. This woman not only worked with us in the Anti-War Committee and other groups, she involved herself in our personal lives. Getting to know our children, joining in birthday celebrations, paying visits on our families when someone's sick."

Sullivan took part in trips both within the US and to the Middle East posing as an activist. In this role she may have been used to finger Palestinians and Colombians for arrest or killing to the CIA, the Israeli Defense Forces, Mossad, and the Colombian secret police. In one case, Sullivan evidently sought to obtain trade union contacts from one AWC member who had been to Colombia, a country where in 2008 the International Trade Union Confederation claims more trade unionists were murdered than in the rest of the world combined.

According to Sundin, besides those targeted for the grand jury, the FBI has questioned a large number of associated activists from North Carolina, Wisconsin, Arizona and California.

Since the original subpoenas of September 2010, the US Attorney's office has widened its dragnet to compel another nine activists to appear before the grand jury. Most of these are Palestinian-Americans and Palestinian solidarity activists from Illinois.

Yesterday nine members of anti-war and Palestinian

solidarity groups were compelled to appear before the Chicago grand jury for the first time. One of these is Maureen Murphy, a journalist who has been active in opposition to Israel's repression of Palestinians. In a statement, Murphy said she and the others would refuse to comply with the grand jury, calling the process a "fishing expedition."

Coinciding with yesterday's grand jury hearing, the Committee to Stop FBI Repression held demonstrations in Chicago, Minneapolis, and other cities.

The 14 activists victimized in the September raids invoked their Fifth Amendment right when requested to appear before the Chicago grand jury, and subpoenas were withdrawn. However, the US Attorney's office has reactivated subpoenas for at least three people. It is expected that these activists will be offered "immunity" under the grand jury proceeding. Failure to cooperate could lead to prison detention during the course of a drawn-out investigation.

The FBI infiltration of political groups, police raids, and the grand jury inquisition by the Obama administration aim to intimidate and criminalize opposition to government policy and roll back democratic rights. They come at a time of deepening economic crisis and a war that has lasted longer than any other in US history. The ruling elite recognize they cannot pursue their global military objectives while slashing living standards at home without coming up against the resistance of masses of workers. The events in Chicago and Minneapolis signal that the label of terrorism will be used on a wider scale against working class opposition.

Another instance of the manufacture of "terrorist" evidence by the government was brought to light in a separate event in the past week. An investigative report appearing in the *Twin Cities Daily Planet* revealed that former Ramsey County Sheriff Robert Fletcher had concocted various terrorist activities or threats out of whole cloth. Fletcher was the point man for the government raids and arrests carried out during the 2008 Republican National Convention in St. Paul.

The sheriff claimed he had prepared 78 Terrorism Information Briefs and that citizens under his jurisdiction were "threatened by 22 domestic and 11 international terrorist groups in 2009." None of this alleged terrorist activity could be corroborated by a subsequent official examination of the sheriff's

records.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact