

Occupy protests targeted by FBI counterterror units

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Internal Federal Bureau of Investigation documents released last Saturday by a civil liberties organization show that FBI anti-terror units across the US targeted and spied on the Occupy Wall Street movement even before the anti-Wall Street protests got underway in September 2011.

The secret documents, obtained by the Partnership for Public Justice Fund (PCJF) through Freedom of Information requests and published on the organization's web site, show that the FBI used police informants and infiltrators to systematically monitor the activities of anti-Wall Street groups and share information about them with other federal, state and local police agencies as well as with private corporations.

The documents are heavily redacted. Nevertheless, they demonstrate that the so-called "war on terror" and the police-state laws and agencies established in its name are being employed to disrupt and suppress political dissent and protect the American corporate-financial elite against the growth of social opposition.

This direct attack on Constitutionally protected free-speech rights, begun under the Bush administration, has been expanded by the Obama administration, which treats virtually all forms of social and political protest as a potential criminal and terrorist threat. This confirms that the central target of the Homeland Security Department, the USA PATRIOT ACT, the Guantanamo gulag, the military tribunals, the gutting of habeas corpus rights and due process, and the policy of extra-judicial assassinations and torture is not Islamist terrorists, but the democratic rights of the American working class.

The documents show that FBI offices and agents across the country were conducting intensive surveillance against the Occupy movement in August 2011, a month prior to the first anti-Wall Street protests in New York City and the occupation of Zuccotti Park in lower Manhattan. As early as August 19, 2011, the FBI in New

York was meeting with the New York Stock Exchange to discuss the impending protests.

In Indiana, the FBI released a "Potential Criminal Activity Alert" on September 15, 2011, even though it acknowledged that no specific date for a protest had been scheduled in the state. The Indiana FBI coordinated with "all Indiana state and local law enforcement agencies" as well as the Indiana Intelligence Fusion Center, the FBI Directorate of Intelligence and other national FBI bodies.

The FBI Campus Liaison Program enlisted both campus police and university officials in New York State to spy on Occupy protests carried out by students and professors.

Documents show that the response to the protests was coordinated via the Domestic Security Alliance Council (DSAC), described by the federal government as "a strategic partnership between the FBI, the Department of Homeland Security and the private sector." The DSAC discussed Occupy protests at West Coast ports to "raise awareness concerning this type of criminal activity."

Naval Criminal Investigative Services reported to the DSAC on links between Occupy Wall Street and trade unions in the organization of the port protests.

The FBI in Anchorage, Alaska reported on a Joint Terrorism Task Force meeting of November 3, 2011 concerning Occupy activities in Anchorage. A port security officer arranged with the FBI to attend a planning meeting of the protesters and report back to the FBI.

The Jacksonville, Florida FBI in October 2011 issued a Domestic Terrorism briefing on the "spread of the Occupy Wall Street Movement." The briefing linked protests in Daytona, Gainesville and Ocala Resident Agency territories with "some of the highest unemployment rates in Florida."

The Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond, Virginia contacted the FBI in the city "to pass on updates of the events and decisions made during the small rallies" as well as information received from "the Capital Police

Intelligence Unit through JTTF (Joint Terrorism Task Force).”

Similar memos from FBI anti-terror units in Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Memphis, Tennessee; Birmingham and Jackson, Mississippi; and Denver, Colorado speak of coordinated spying on Occupy protesters by federal, state and local police agencies, working in tandem with private financial institutions.

Mara Verheyden-Hilliard, executive director of the Partnership for Civil Justice Fund, said: “[W]e believe this is just the tip of the iceberg... These documents show that the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security are treating protests against the corporate and banking structure of America as potential criminal and terrorist activity. These documents also show these federal agencies functioning as a de facto intelligence arm of Wall Street and Corporate America.”

The intervention of the FBI and other federal agencies against the Occupy protests did not stop at surveillance. The massive scope and systematic nature of the spying exposed by the documents posted by the PCJF make it clear that the Obama administration coordinated the police attacks and court actions taken at the state and local level to suppress the protests and end the occupations. Mass arrests, tear gas and constant harassment were all employed in the course of the months-long protests.

This state repression was aided and abetted by the non-stop efforts of the anarchist and pseudo-left organizations in the leadership of the movement to channel it behind the trade union bureaucracy and the Democratic Party.

The Obama administration has increasingly utilized the anti-democratic methods employed to entrap Muslims in the US and prosecute them as terrorists—police infiltrators and provocateurs, fake terror plots concocted by police agents—to ensnare and frame up activists involved in protest actions against US wars abroad and attacks on living standards at home. Recent examples include:

- * The arrest and prosecution on terrorism charges of five young men involved in protests last May against the NATO summit in Chicago. All five were implicated by undercover agents.

- * The entrapment that same month of five young men in Cleveland by undercover agents, who lured the alleged “anarchists” into a phony plot to blow up a bridge.

- * A series of FBI raids last summer on the homes of anti-Wall Street protesters in Portland, Oregon and Seattle and Olympia, Washington. Scores of heavily armed domestic terrorism agents used stun grenades and battering rams to smash through doors and threaten their victims with

automatic weapons.

- * The September 2010 raids ordered by the Obama administration on the homes of leaders of the Anti-War Committee and the Freedom Road Socialist Organization in Minneapolis and Chicago, justified under the “material support for terrorism” provisions of the USA PATRIOT Act.

PCJF Executive Director Verheyden-Hilliard pointed to one aspect of the utilization of the FBI as a political police force against social opposition. “The collection of information on people’s free-speech actions,” she told the *New York Times*, “is being entered into unregulated databases, a vast storehouse of information widely disseminated to a range of law enforcement and, apparently, private entities.”

Earlier this month, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that the Obama administration in March approved a vast expansion of the power of the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) to copy government databases on ordinary Americans, even if there is no reason to suspect them of criminal or terrorist activities. “Under the new rules issued in March,” the *Journal* wrote, “the National Counterterrorism Center... can obtain almost any database the government collects that it says is ‘reasonably believed’ to contain ‘terrorism information.’ The list could potentially include almost any government database, from financial forms submitted by people seeking federally backed mortgages to the health records of people who sought treatment at Veterans Administration hospitals.”



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