



National Whistleblower Center

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

INSPECTOR GENERAL: HIGH-RANKING FBI OFFICIALS APPROVED ILLEGAL SEARCHES

Washington, D.C. March 13, 2008. Today the Department of Justice Inspector General's office has released yet another report confirming that the highest ranking FBI counterterrorism officials violated the Patriot Act when authorizing warrantless searches of over 3000 phone numbers through the use of National Security Letters ("NSL"). These Letters, authorized under the Patriot Act, permit FBI managers to sign search warrants without judicial notification or approval.

Buried on pages 129-30 of today's report, the Inspector General found:

"More troubling, 11 blanket NSL's issued by [FBI] Headquarters officials in 2006 that sought telephone data on 3,860 telephone numbers did not comply with the Patriot Reauthorization Act requirements respecting these provisions, internal FBI policy, or both. We are concerned by the failure of senior Counterterrorism Division officials to comply with statutory requirements and internal policy regarding the issuance of NSL's and their failure to consult legal counsel."

The officials who signed the National Security Letters include the two highest ranking FBI counterterrorism managers, the current Assistant Director for Counterterrorism and Executive Assistant Director for Counterterrorism.

Stephen M. Kohn, the President of the National Whistleblower Center, issued the following statements:

"The FBI continues to make grave errors within its counterterrorism program. These mistakes threaten both individual civil liberties and national security. It is unacceptable that over six years after the 9/11 attacks the FBI still does not understand basic rules governing counterterrorism operations. The FBI and Department of Justice have refused to listen to internal whistleblowers who have documented numerous problems within the counterterrorism program which threaten the safety of every American. Although the Inspector General has again documented problems with the abuses of the NSLs, they have refused to order changes in basic FBI policies which caused the NSL violations."

Mr. Kohn represents Bassem Youssef, the highest ranking Arab American FBI agent employed within the FBI's Counterterrorism Division. According to a report issued by the Department of Justice Office of Professional Responsibility, the FBI illegally retaliated against Mr. Youssef after he reported deficiencies in the counterterrorism program to Congress and the Director of the FBI. On January 12, 2008, Mr. Youssef addressed a convention of the American Library Association and explained how the lack of subject matter expertise within the FBI was the root cause of the FBI's NSL fiasco.

* [Click to view today's DOJ OIG Report](#)

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Since 1988 the NWC has championed whistleblower protection. The NWC is currently supporting FBI Whistleblower Bassem Youssef, who has reported serious misconduct in the War on Terror, and the NWC is currently assisting Bunnatine Greenhouse (the former Army Corps of Engineers top contracting officer who opposed the no-bid multi billion dollar contracts awarded to Halliburton for the reconstruction of Iraq)

For more information, please visit www.whistleblowers.org and www.whistleblowersblog.org.