

# NATIONAL LAWYERS GUILD PORTLAND, OREGON CHAPTER



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January 3, 2011

Dear Mayor Adams and City Council Members-

Recently, the issue of resuming participation in the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force has been publicly raised. We write today to encourage the City of Portland to maintain its current position and decline participation with the JTTF. The reasons Portland severed ties with JTTF in 2005 remain acute concerns; moreover, recent events cast doubt that a Portland JTTF would be able to adhere to the values of Portlanders, nor allow participating Portland Police to follow state law.

In 2005, Portland took a brave step in withdrawing from the JTTF. As the Council is well aware, the FBI was not willing to allow proper local oversight to ensure that participating police followed State law. ORS 181.575 prohibits the Oregon law enforcement from collecting any information on groups or individuals unless it directly relates to a criminal investigation and there are reasonable grounds that the suspect or group is involved. This problem remains: Portland, its taxpayers, and its residents deserve the requisite oversight. Actions of various JTTF's since 2005 around the country only amplify this problem. It is worth a brief look at the actions of JTTF offices around the country.

At the 2008 Republican National Convention there was widespread, and well documented, JTTF directed surveillance of lawful and peaceful political protestors. In June 2008, the Minneapolis Newspaper City Pages, discovered that JTTF officers were tasked with infiltrating protest groups in the lead up to the Convention. Indeed, the University of Minnesota Police acknowledged that Sgt. Erik Swanson arranged for meetings between would-be informants and the FBI. Sgt. Swanson was that departments JTTF participant.

In 2005 domestic political espionage surfaced again in Denver, CO. There, a frightening number of documents were obtained by the ACLU exposing routine surveillance of peaceful organizations and individuals. Tactics taken by the local Detective assigned to the JTTF include: following peaceful demonstrators to their vehicles in order to identify them, intercepting emails about political events, and ongoing surveillance of organizations such as the American Friends Service Committee and the Denver Peace and Justice Committee.

Most recently, the homes of political activists were raided on September 24, 2010 in Minneapolis and Chicago. No arrests were made; rather, hundreds of items were seized

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The NATIONAL LAWYERS GUILD is an association dedicated to the need for basic change in the structure of our political and economic system. We seek to unite the lawyers, law students, legal workers and jailhouse lawyers of America in an organization that shall function as an effective political and social force in the service of the people, to the end that human rights shall be regarded as more sacred than property interests.

from their homes including portraits of Martin Luther King Jr. and children's drawings. In the same light, the New York JTTF searched the home of, and arrested, Elliot Madison for operating a twitter feed during the 2009 G-20 Protests in Pennsylvania. His crime: including information to the twitter subscribers relaying dispersal orders the police were issuing, and general movements of police officers throughout the day. Mr. Madison's subscribers included CNN and the New York Times, whose offices were not raided. Objects seized from his home included Curious George stuffed animals and a needle-point of Lenin made by his grandmother.

Such abuses of lawful, peaceful political activity are reminiscent of a dark era of Portland. As the Portland Tribune reported, the Portland Police's Intelligence Division waged a decades long surveillance operation on the political activities of Portlanders. When finally unearthed, the secret files numbered some 37 boxes containing over 800 manila file folders. These folders contained intelligence on over 3,000 people and hundreds of organizations.

This is not an era we want to return to. Thank you for your considered approach to this issue. We urge you to continue to refrain from participation in a Joint Terrorism Task Force. We look forward to offering additional comments as this issue continues to be discussed.

Sincerely,

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