

U.S. SENATOR PATRICK LEAHY

CONTACT: Office of Senator Leahy, 202-224-4242

VERMONT

Following is the text of a letter sent today (Wed., June 19) by Sen. Patrick Leahy, chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, and Sen. Charles Grassley, a senior member of the committee, to Glenn Fine, the Justice Department's Inspector General, in which the senators ask Fine to pursue answers to several questions during his inquiry into the matter of allegations made by a former FBI contract linguist. -

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June 19, 2002

The Honorable Glenn A. Fine
Inspector General
Department of Justice
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Mr. Fine:

The Senate Judiciary Committee has received unclassified information from the FBI regarding allegations made by Ms. Sibel D. Edmonds, a former FBI contract linguist, that your office is currently investigating. We request that, as this investigation progresses, you consider the following questions on this matter:

(1) Ms. Edmonds has alleged, and the FBI has confirmed, that the FBI assigned a contract language "monitor" to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, contrary to clear FBI policy that only more qualified "linguists" be assigned to Guantanamo Bay. What circumstances led to the contract language monitor being considered qualified for this assignment, and what were the consequences, if any, for the effectiveness of the interrogation of those being detained at Guantanamo?

(2) Ms. Edmonds has alleged, and the FBI has confirmed, that another contract linguist in the FBI unit to which Ms. Edmonds was assigned failed to translate at least two communications reflecting a foreign official's handling of intelligence matters. The FBI has confirmed that the contract linguist had "unreported contacts" with that foreign official. To what extent did that contract linguist have any additional unreported or reported contacts with that foreign official? What counterintelligence inquiries or assessments, if any, were made with respect to those contacts? Do you plan to interview field office and headquarters counterintelligence personnel regarding this matter?

(3) The FBI has said that, to review the other contract linguist's work that Ms. Edmonds questioned, it used three linguists in its language division, a supervisory special agent, and special agents who worked on the case that generated the communications under review. Was this a "blind" review by the linguists, or did they know the person whose work was under review? Were the linguists sufficiently independent to make objective judgments about the translations in question? Would it have been appropriate to use linguists from outside the FBI?

(4) The FBI has said a determination was made by the supervisory special agent that the contract linguist whose work was reviewed made a mistake and that the matter was a training issue. Did this agent's position affect his ability to render an objective judgment? What input did the other special agents provide? Did their involvement in the case that generated the communications affect their ability to make an objective judgement about a person with whom they had worked on the case? Would it have been better to ask other counterintelligence agents to assess the importance of the untranslated information and the reason it was not translated?

(5) To what extent is the credibility of witnesses regarding Ms. Edmonds' allegations affected by their continuing employment in the same translation unit and under the same supervisor where the contract linguist discussed in question (2) is employed.

(6) The FBI has said that Ms. Edmonds prepared two classified documents with respect to her allegations on her home computer without authorization and that one witness reported Ms. Edmonds discussed classified information regarding her allegations in the presence of three uncleared members of her family without authorization. Would these actions disqualify her from a security clearance, given the circumstances of her concern about a foreign attempt to penetrate or influence FBI operations at her workplace?

(7) What guidance is provided to FBI contract linguists as to the steps they should take if they are concerned about a possible foreign attempt to penetrate or influence FBI operations? How well is this guidance understood by contract linguists in the FBI translation centers and other FBI personnel who would handle such matters?

(8) What improvements, if any, are needed to encourage FBI contract linguists and other FBI contract personnel to come forward with such counterintelligence concerns and to ensure that they are not adversely affected as a result of seeking to assist FBI counterintelligence efforts? Was Ms. Edmonds' case handled in a manner that would encourage such reporting in the future?

Please let us know the timetable for your investigation and advise us of the results.

Sincerely,

PATRICK LEAHY
Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary

CHARLES E. GRASSLEY
United States Senator

