

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

OCTOBER PLAN REPORT

*by Engy Abdelkader, Esq.**
Council on American-Islamic Relations

September 15 – Washington, D.C.

Federal Bureau of Investigation Director Robert S. Mueller III and John E. McLaughlin, then acting director of the Central Intelligence Agency, obtain new intelligence regarding an alleged terrorist attack before Election Day by operatives who may have already arrived in the country. *Washington Post, 10/23/04*

September 17 – Washington, D.C.

FBI launches a massive security counter-offensive comprised of “extraordinary measures” including interrogations, “aggressive – even obvious – surveillance” techniques, detentions and arrests of Arab and Muslim Americans innocent of criminal wrongdoing. Mosques are to be revisited with worshippers questioned about suspicious behavior. Recent truck and chemical thefts as well as peculiar cargo truck rentals are to be reviewed. The pre-election dragnet is referred to as the “October Plan”. *CBS News, 9/17/04*

September 20 – New York, New York

The New York Civil Liberties Union, along with the American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee of New York, request the FBI’s local field office to produce information on its new law enforcement effort such as: how many people in the area does the FBI intend to question/interview; how will individuals be identified for questioning; will interviewees be questioned about their religious or political beliefs and activities; who will conduct the questioning; will government agencies other than the FBI participate.

September 22 – New York, New York

The Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund announces that it is offering free legal advice and representation to concerned individuals approached by the FBI or other government agencies.

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September 25 – Los Angeles, California

Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) agents require a twenty-three-year-old Muslim man to follow them to passport control at Los Angeles International Airport (LAX). The agents question him about the length of his trip abroad and the purpose of his travel; the young man explains that he is returning home to America after vacationing in Egypt. The agents thereafter escort him to claim his baggage whereupon they search his luggage, including personal items such as pictures of his recent engagement party. Two men approach the man identifying themselves as Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents. The twenty-three-year-old is interrogated: what was the purpose of his trip to Egypt; had he engaged in any political discussions there; had anyone attempted to recruit him to steal company secrets or secrets of the United States government. The victim is a United States citizen, a university student and a Systems Analyst; his employment does not require government security clearance.

The college student recalls being approached by local FBI agents in July 2004 at which time he answered questions for one and one half hours without an attorney present; questions surrounded a series of donations he had made to various Islamic charities, a number of names originating from locations in the Middle East and whether there were any individuals who were of the “Jihadi type” at his mosque. Back at LAX, agents snap his photograph and return his passport and license. He believes the incidents are connected, stating, “I feel like my rights have been violated and that I am being discriminated against purely based on race and religion. They had no reason to profile me in this manner.”

September 29 – New York, New York

A recent Muslim convert is returning home after vacationing in Bermuda. At U.S. Customs he is taken to an empty room for questioning. He requests water in order to take medication for post-traumatic stress disorder and the officers laugh in response. The victim suffers an attack.

September 30 – Washington, D.C.

Muslim, Arab American and civil liberties advocacy organizations participate in a national strategizing session.

The Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) articulates its purpose of protecting the country by arresting immigration violators deemed as threatening national security. In a statement it explains that it has been working for the past several months at a heightened level in support of the government-wide interagency security plan that will remain in effect through the 2005 Presidential Inauguration.

September 30 – Seattle, Washington

Arab and Muslim American community leaders meet with Washington State FBI Special Agent in Charge and the U.S. Attorney to discuss the October Plan but do not obtain answers to questions on the number of individuals to be interviewed and the criteria for selecting interviewees.

September 30 – Tampa, Florida

Representatives of the Council on American Islamic Relations regional office in Florida meet with the FBI's Special Agent in Charge (SAC) of the Mid-Florida district. The FBI's SAC advised that the "October Plan" includes all agencies under the United States Department of Justice and that each of the fifty-six FBI field offices will operate a "command post" designed to take in leads, dispatch agents and coordinate activities. CAIR-FL representatives expressed concerns that their initiative should not intimidate Muslim voters from participating on Election Day.

September 30 – Coral Gables, Florida

The first of three U.S. presidential debates between President George W. Bush and Democratic rival Senator John Kerry takes place at the University of Miami campus in Coral Gables, Florida.

October 1 – Phoenix, Arizona

A Christian woman married to a Muslim man is visited by two FBI agents at her home. The agents ask if her husband is at home and when she responds he is not, they request to speak with her. She consents to an interview believing it might otherwise appear as if she had "something to hide". The agents ask: how do you feel about the Bush administration; is your husband an active Muslim; does he hit you; does your husband attend the mosque; what does your husband speak about with his associates when they meet for dinner or tea. They request she telephone them if she hears her husband discussing terrorist activity with his friends. The woman says the agents were polite, courteous and genuinely concerned for her welfare; her husband believes she is naive.

October 2 – Washington, D.C.

More than 350 people who have reportedly committed crimes or are suspected of terrorist links are arrested in a federal crackdown on foreigners with visa violations. *Associated Press, 10/02/04*

October 4 – Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

During a meeting with the FBI Special Agent in Charge and the U.S. Attorney, the Islamic Council of Greater Pittsburgh leaders learn that the FBI wants to interview forty-four area Muslims for information that might assist authorities uncover a possible

terrorist attack. They would not explain how the Muslims were selected. *Tribune-Review, 10/12/04*

October 6 – Sacramento, California

Over thirty Muslim leaders of the Sacramento Valley Muslim community meet with FBI Special Agent in Charge and the U.S. Attorney who are confronted with a quote from the *Contra Costa Times* in which an FBI San Francisco spokeswoman stated: “We are looking for dissidents, those who are anti-government.” FBI officials express their disagreement and try to explain.

October 7 – Washington, D.C.

Attorney General John Ashcroft issues a sweeping directive authorizing the FBI to use hundreds of law enforcement agents from other federal agencies, including the U.S. Marshals Service, the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives as part of a nationwide effort by FBI-led counter-terrorism units to seek out and stop any plots against the elections. U.S. law enforcement officials continue to say that beyond intelligence reports indicating that al-Qaeda wants to disrupt the elections, they have no specific information about an existing plot, method or target of a potential attack. Ashcroft’s directive, which is to remain in effect for 60 days, allows FBI field supervisors unusually broad authority to use personnel from other agencies to conduct interviews, assist in surveillance and help in other anti-terror duties. Democratic election officials and civil rights advocates have accused the Republican White House of creating a climate of fear that could suppress voter turnout. *USA Today, 10/07/04*

October 7 – Paramus, New Jersey

At approximately 8:20 A.M. two U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents arrive at the home of a Muslim family inquiring about an individual’s immigration status. The individual about whom they are inquiring is not at home and a relative indicates he does not know his precise whereabouts and provides the general vicinity in which he can be found. The agent accuses him of withholding information and demands to see his passport. The relative refuses explaining that he is a U.S. Citizen. The agents leave shortly thereafter but not before jotting down the license plates to the vehicles parked in front of the home, smiling sarcastically and waving good-bye.

October 8 – Columbia, South Carolina

FBI agents meet with Muslim spiritual and community leaders asking them to report suspicious behavior and explaining that their intensified initiatives are part of an effort to “shake the trees” for new information. *The State, 10/12/04*

October 8 - Michigan

Arab and Muslim advocates meet with FBI, ICE, FAMS, CBP, DEA, ATF and other law enforcement agencies regarding their plans for interviewing individuals to glean information on a potential terrorist attack during the elections. They are planning to interview people in several communities. The method of interviews will be determined on a case-by-case basis (i.e., advance telephone calls, knocking on the door at home, finding them at their workplace or elsewhere).

October 8 – New London, Connecticut

A letter is sent from the FBI to the Islamic Center of New London stating that special agents had attempted to contact them regarding the FBI's Community Outreach Program and explaining that the FBI is currently visiting the various mosques in Connecticut to make their members aware of the FBI's dedication to investigating Civil Rights cases. Indeed, prior to sending the letter an FBI agent had left his card at the ICNL front door. The letter enclosed two brochures from the Department of Justice, one in English and the other in Arabic, describing the protection afforded by federal civil rights laws.

October 8 – St. Louis, Missouri

The second of three U.S. presidential debates between President George W. Bush and Democratic rival Senator John Kerry is held at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri.

October 9 – Washington, D.C.

At a meeting of the United States Commission on Civil Rights, Republican Commission members fail in their attempt to have the Commission's review of the Bush administration's record on civil rights removed from public domain. The Commission found that the administration responded to the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks by instituting regulations that facilitate profiling rather than prevent it. Immigrants and visitors from Arab and Middle Eastern countries were subjected to increased scrutiny, including interviews, registration, and in some cases removal. "Arab and Muslim immigrants and visitors are frequently the target of surveillance, incarceration, or various other processes merely because of their religion, nationality, physical appearance, or similar factors unrelated to terrorism." The report went as far as saying, "The struggle toward equal rights for all remains elusive..."

October 12 – Kansas City, Missouri

FBI officials meet with Muslim leaders who ask if the interviews could be set up in advance and whether the interviews could be done after Ramadan. Several area residents question whether the interviews are intended to scare Muslims from the voting booth. *The Kansas City Star, 10/12/04.*

October 13 – Houston, Texas

A Muslim man who is a U.S. Citizen arrives at George Bush International Airport in Texas. After passing through immigration and customs he is directed to go through a complete screening by a Department of Homeland Security agent. The screener requests to see his passport and inquires about his travel plans. He responds he is returning home from a three-week family visit to Afghanistan. The screener states he finds this “interesting” and calls for assistance on his radio. Three additional agents arrive and begin scrutinizing his passport while murmuring that this is a “perfect example”. He is then surrounded by four DHS officers, instructed to submit his drivers license and social security card and ordered to follow them to their office. The young man waited for five (5) hours, without explanation and without being allowed to contact his family or friends, until he was told that their investigation was completed and he was free to leave. The man recalls “I asked what was wrong and whether I had committed a crime by visiting Afghanistan. Again no reply, discussion or explanation was given.”

October 13 – Columbia, Missouri

Federal and local law enforcement agents search the Islamic American Relief Agency as part of what the FBI describe generically as a criminal investigation. The search of the Columbia office occurs as the Bush administration accuses the Sudan-based Islamic African Relief Agency of helping finance Osama bin Laden and other terrorists. The Treasury Department directs U.S. banks to block any assets found in the U.S. belonging to the Islamic African Relief Agency and five designated officials. The department said the group, headquartered in Khartoum, Sudan, has more than 40 offices worldwide. An FBI spokesman would not say whether the search was connected to terrorism. Among those participating in the search was a man wearing a jacket of the Joint Terrorism Task Force. *Associated Press, 10/13/04.*

October 13 – Wolcott, Connecticut

A dozen or more federal agents raid the home of a local mosque leader who traveled to Africa to do humanitarian work for the Islamic American Relief Agency.

October 13 – Indianapolis, Indiana

Special agents from the US Department of the Treasury, Criminal Investigation Division and the US Department of Homeland Security, Joint Terrorism Task Force Division visit a Muslim woman at her home and interrogate her regarding donations to the Islamic American Relief Agency (IARA USA). In addition to answering questions such as have you made any donations to Iraq and why do you donate money to charitable causes, the woman is also asked to produce copies of receipts for more than two dozen donations and her tax returns. The IRS agent then produces a copy of one of her donation checks which they had specifically asked and for which she had been searching frantically. They ask for all of her donation receipts for 2003 and 2004 which she agrees to provide before they leave. The woman states, “If an organization’s actions are in question, then it is the

government's responsibility to investigate them. The donating public is an innocent bystander and should not be targeted or harassed."

October 13 – Montgomery Village, Maryland

IRS and FBI agents visit a Muslim woman at her home and interrogate her regarding donations to the Islamic American Relief Agency (IARA USA). The IRS agent conducts the majority of the questioning. The Muslim woman also asked questions such as why she was selected for an interview. They respond they are only doing their job and that a big investigation was centered in St. Louis, Missouri where IARA's main office is located. The FBI agent states that some of the allegations of terrorist funding comes from Muslims and even from countries like Saudi Arabia. The woman states, "Before they left I asked them what was next and they said that the investigation would be continuing but there was nothing for me to worry about because I had not done anything wrong."

October 13 – Tempe, Arizona

The third of the three U.S. presidential debates between incumbent President George W. Bush and Democratic rival Senator John Kerry takes place.

October 14 – undisclosed city, Colorado

A Muslim man who is contacted by a Joint Terrorism Task Force agent to set up a meeting to discuss Islamic charities refuses to meet without the benefit of an attorney. The man has been previously contacted in July 2004 in connection with national security concerns surrounding the general election.

October 15 – New York, New York

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) Immigrant Rights Project issues Know Your Rights information advising immigrants who are approached by FBI and/or DHS agents to contact the ACLU, American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, Council on American Islamic Relations or Muslim Public Affairs Council for free legal advice about an interview.

October 17 – Las Vegas, Nevada

A twenty-five year old Pakistani Muslim immigrant visits friends at the New York New York Hotel in Las Vegas when he is stopped at the gate by a parking lot security guard who is checking photograph identification. The guard instructs him to park his vehicle to the side and the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department is called. Detectives search his vehicle and question him about Islam: what is Ramadan; how long do you fast; why do you fast; is it difficult; what is Hajj; how many days do you stay there; what do you do there; how much does it cost to do Hajj; can't you do it on donations from other people; don't you know Arabic; why do you want to learn Arabic; how do you understand Quran without knowing Arabic; what are your views of things happening; do you consider

yourself as a moderate or progressive Muslim; do you think that men and women are equal; what in your opinion is the right Muslim way to deal with non-Muslims; how do you relate all the terrorists and their use of Islamic text; is it ok to use violent force for justice. The detectives photograph the twenty-five-year-old, papers in his vehicle on the subject of Ramadan and his notebook of Arabic grammar.

The Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement is contacted and agents report to the scene. They escort the young man to his apartment to verify his immigration status. An ICE agent apologizes for ruining his evening explaining that he is just doing his job. He asks him to keep his eyes and ears open and also suggests that he can set him up with a detective who is investigating another individual; they may ask him to have lunch with the purported suspect. An agent then states they may have a look at his visa application which is pending with the authorities. The young man learns later that the officers also interviewed his friends who were staying at the hotel, telling them that he was in trouble and that he did not have documents. The man was detained a total of five (5) hours.

October 18 – Richmond, Virginia

The American Civil Liberties Union of Virginia announces it will provide lawyers to assist persons selected for questioning under the October Plan.

October 18 – South Ozone Park, New York

An elderly Muslim man, who is a retired government worker, had a ten (10) year visa which would expire in 2012 and came twice to the United States to visit his son, grandson and daughter-in-law. That opportunity was taken away from him when he received a call from the Embassy of Guyana telling him that they have revoked his visa. He went to the Embassy and asked the reason for the cancellation of his visa and was advised by a consular official that it was requested from Washington. He was handed a letter stated “212(A)(3)(B)” which means “Terrorist activity past or present.” His son, a permanent legal resident, says “I am curious to know why these circumstances seem only common with people having Muslim names . . . I think it is unfair to prevent a grandfather from seeing his son, grandson and daughter-in-law for a reason he is innocent of .. I would like my father’s name to be cleared and status to be restored back to him.”

October 19 – Washington, D.C.

The United States Department of Treasury issues list of 27 Islamic charities designated by the U.S. government as supporters of terrorism. *Dawn, 10/19/04*

October 20 – Cleveland, Ohio

Leaders of the Northeast Ohio Muslim and Arab-American communities meet with officials from the FBI, the Justice Department and local law enforcement to discuss the October Plan.

October 20 – Nashville, Tennessee

A twenty-nine-year-old Egyptian born computer programmer was on his way to visit a friend sick with cancer when he is stopped by Metro police, handcuffed and placed in a patrol car for almost an hour. The officer explains that computer records indicate he might be wanted by federal agencies in connection with terrorism. He is released an hour later without any idea what he has done wrong.

October 21 – Kansas City, Missouri

Attorney Shareef Akeel denies that the Islamic American Relief Agency-USA had a connection to the Sudan-based Islamic African Relief Agency that the Bush administration has accused of helping raise more than \$5 million to finance Osama bin Laden and other terrorists. Akeel called the Columbia operation a "completely separate organization." No one has been arrested or charged in what the FBI describes as a criminal investigation, but up to 90 individuals have been interviewed. *Newsday*, 10/21/04

October 21 – San Francisco, California

The American Civil Liberties Union of Northern California sues the FBI trying to get more information about the agency's questioning of Muslims and Arabs as it investigates the possibility of pre-election terror attacks. The suit comes a month after the FBI refused the group's request to immediately respond to its Freedom of Information Act claim, stating that it would process the request in a "first-in-first-out" basis, a process that would take more than a year. *Associated Press*, 10/21/04

October 23 – Washington, D.C.

U.S. intelligence and law enforcement officials say they have found no direct evidence of an election-related terrorist plot. Despite hundreds of interviews, immigration arrests and other aggressive measures, law enforcement officials say they have been unable to detect signs of an ongoing plot in the United States, nor have they identified specific targets, dates or methods that might be used in one. At the Department of Homeland Security, an immigration unit has reportedly detained 120 foreigners on charges of being in the country illegally. A key CIA source who claimed knowledge of a pre-election assault has been discredited. *Washington Post*, 10/23/04