

Mueller's Latest Blunder

Editorial

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WASHINGTON, DC -- When President Bush nominated **Robert Mueller** to become **FBI** director last summer, the choice received glowing praise from Democrats and Republicans alike.

But patience with **Mr. Mueller** must be wearing thin now that he has accepted an invitation to deliver a June 28 address to the American Muslim Council (AMC), a defender of terrorist organizations. **FBI** spokesman Bill Carter says that **Mr. Mueller** accepted the invitation because the bureau regards the AMC as "the most mainstream Muslim group in the United States." Yet, despite its efforts to cultivate an image of moderation, a careful look at the public record shows that the AMC is anything but.

Middle East scholar Daniel Pipes, for example, noted recently that longtime AMC director Abdurahman Alamoudi made the following declaration at a rally outside the White House two years ago: "We are all supporters of Hamas. Allahu Akhbar. I am also a supporter of Hezbollah." This sort of extremism persuaded Mr. Bush to return Mr. Alamoudi's \$1,000 contribution to his 2000 presidential campaign.

In the wake of September 11, Mr. Bush ordered that an organization known as the Holy Land Foundation be shut down for collecting money "used to support the Hamas terror organization." In a Jerusalem Post op-ed last week, Mr. Pipes wrote that the Holy Land Foundation has been "one of the main conduits of money to Hamas; not surprisingly, the AMC has lavished praise on it, bestowing an award on it for a 'strong global vision.' " After Mr. Bush shut down that organization, the AMC responded by denouncing the president's decision as "disturbing . . . unjust and counterproductive."

So, instead of giving legitimacy to such a group by choosing it as a lunchtime companion, **Mr. Mueller** would do well to follow the advice of Mr. Pipes and "put the organization under surveillance, ascertain its funding sources, look over its books, and check its staff's visa status." Unfortunately, **Mr. Mueller** probably won't do any of this unless he is pressured to do so. Time and time again during the war on terror, **Mr. Mueller** chose the bureaucratically "safe" path of hewing to political correctness over decisive action to defend Americans' most important civil liberty: the right to be protected from the terrorist sociopaths who murdered close to 3,000 of their fellow citizens on the morning of September 11.

He reacted dismissively when asked about the need to reform of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act so that the **FBI** could have investigated suspected terrorist Zacarias Moussaoui prior to September 11. Appearing earlier this month before the Senate Judiciary Committee, **Mr. Mueller** grovelled when liberal ideologues like Sen. Russell Feingold demanded that he condemn the commonsense use of "profiling" (in other words, tighten the security screws on Middle Eastern men at airports). At a minimum, Mr. Bush should sit **Mr. Mueller** down and read him the riot act about lunching with Hamas and Hezbollah supporters like the American Muslim Council.

"It certainly doesn't qualify as an organization that stands with us in the war on terrorism," Harris said. "Everything we know about the American Muslim Council over the last decade or more makes very clear on what side of the divide they stand, and it's not on our country's side."

Faiz Rehman, the AMC's communications director, called such allegations "fundamentally flawed," and argued that Mueller's decision to speak at the convention underscores the council's mainstream credentials.

"I don't think the FBI chief would have accepted our invitation without some due diligence," Rehman said. "It's McCarthyism at its worst. They are trying to marginalize us and demonize us."

Much of the public controversy over the group has centered on its founder and former executive director, Abdurahman Alamoudi. At an anti-Israel rally outside the White House in October 2000, Alamoudi responded to media reports that he was a supporter of the Palestinian militant group Hamas.

"We are all supporters of Hamas," Alamoudi said. "I wish they added that I am also a supporter of Hezbollah," a Lebanese group that was behind the 1983 bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Beirut, which killed 243 Marines.

The comments prompted the campaigns of George W. Bush and Hillary Rodham Clinton to return campaign contributions from Alamoudi. Rehman said yesterday that Alamoudi, who also sat on the AMC's board, no longer has any position with the group.

But Harris and other critics point to other controversies involving the AMC, including its support of the Holy Land and Global Relief foundations even after the groups were shuttered by the U.S. government last year as suspected terrorist fundraisers.

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