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# Chicago agent focus of 4th FBI inquiry

## Man was critical of terrorism work

By Todd Lighty and Kim Barker  
Tribune staff reporters

**#1** The FBI has opened its fourth internal investigation into a Chicago agent who has repeatedly criticized the bureau for failing to follow up on terrorism leads, two U.S. senators said Thursday.

**#2** Agent Robert G. Wright Jr. is being investigated for alleged insubordination by releasing information to the media, a congressional source said. Wright held a news conference in Washington, D.C., on June 2 and accused the FBI of bungling terrorism investigations and failing to do enough to pre-

vent the Sept. 11 attacks.

**#3** Sens. Charles Grassley (R-Iowa) and Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) sent a letter Thursday to FBI Director Robert Mueller, saying they were troubled by the bureau's apparent haste to open internal investigations every time an agent speaks publicly about problems in the FBI. The two are the ranking members of the Senate Judiciary Committee and complained to Mueller in May that another agent was being unfairly retaliated against for accusing co-workers of stealing.

**#4** "The FBI should worry more about catching terrorists than gagging its own agents," Grassley said in a written statement. "Suppressing free speech is not the

PLEASE SEE AGENT, PAGE 9

CHICAGO

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Chicago Tribune

## AGENT: Investigation angers key U.S. senators

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

way to reform the FBI. Director Mueller has pledged to be open to criticism, so I hold him to his word."

**#5** Three previous internal investigations into Wright—two opened in 2001 and the other last year—involved allegations he had inappropriately revealed classified information, the congressional source said. Wright was cleared of wrongdoing in all of them, the source said.

**#6** Ross Rice, spokesman for the FBI's Chicago office, declined to discuss any internal investigation.

**#7** "Personal investigative mat-

ters are private matters," he said. "But I do know there are a number of people in this office who have a different perception of Bob Wright's allegations and his view of what happened. Unlike agent Wright, they are following prescribed procedures of the Department of Justice for the release of information."

**#8** Wright declined to comment on the most recent investigation.

**#9** Over the last two years, Wright has repeatedly charged the FBI failed to follow through on his investigation into fundraising and money laundering by the militant Islamic group Hamas. The investigation, code-named Vulgar Betrayal, led in 1998 to the government's seizure of about \$1.4 million in assets from Muhammad Salah of the southwest suburbs and the non-profit group where he worked.

**#10** Salah, who served 5 years in an Israeli prison for allegedly belonging to Hamas, has not been charged with a crime in

the U.S.

**#11** Vulgar Betrayal was essentially ended in 1999 when Wright was transferred after a female agent accused him of sexual harassment.

**#12** After the terrorist attacks, Wright stepped up his criticism of the FBI. He held news conferences, appeared on network television and sued the bureau for blocking publication of his book on his views of how the FBI botched his investigation.

**#13** Last year, a federal grand jury investigation into Hamas fundraising in Chicago intensified, after apparently being dormant for years. In September, Wright was assigned once again to terrorism investigations.

**#14** But he has continued to complain about his bosses. According to a transcript of his news conference June 2, Wright called the FBI's efforts "pathetic" at least three times. He recounted how he once told a supervisor that the bureau's International Terrorism Unit was "a complete joke."

6/13/03  
FRIDAY  
JUNE 13 2003