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FBI Agent Robert Wright Vindicated By Indictments Of Terrorists

Judicial Watch Client Faced Administrative Actions For Pushing Investigations

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Judicial Watch said today that the recent indictments of three men with ties to terrorist organizations is vindication for its client FBI Special Agent Robert Wright, who started an investigation on the matter eight years ago but had the probe shut down because of internal FBI disputes and sensitivities about Saudi Arabia's involvement.

The men, Muhammad Salah, Abdelhaleem Ashquar and Musa Abu Marzook, were charged Aug. 20 by the U.S. Justice Department with racketeering conspiracy for fundraising and funneling money over a 15-year period to the militant Islamic group Hamas. Wright publicly criticized the FBI for its handling of terrorist investigations after the agency in early 2000 stopped his investigation into fundraising and money laundering by Hamas. In retaliation, the FBI has brought several administrative actions against Wright in an attempt to fire him. A memo written by a former FBI official tells how the FBI tried to "take out" Wright. The 14-year veteran of the FBI has two separate lawsuits pending against the agency and is represented in both cases by Judicial Watch and former U.S. House impeachment counsel David Schippers of the Chicago law firm of Schippers and Bailey.

Wright's initial investigation, code named "Vulgar Betrayal" and started in 1996, led to the seizure of \$1.4 million from Salah and a U.S.-based educational group with ties to Hamas. Because of turf battles within the FBI and because it appeared that some of the money had come from Saudi Arabia, a U.S. ally, the investigation was shut down by the Justice Department. Frances Townsend, who now is homeland security adviser to President Bush, played a key role in stopping the investigation, which resumed after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and after Wright publicized the continued failure to act.

"Our client, Bob Wright, was right all along about terrorists in our country, and the FBI and the Justice Department have tried to make him pay for their mistakes," said Judicial Watch President Tom Fitton. "It took four years to prosecute blatant terrorist fundraising uncovered by Special Agent Wright. The U.S. attorney general and the FBI director should apologize to our client and to the American people for their agencies' inexcusable failures to act."

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Judicial Watch is a non-partisan, educational foundation that advocates transparency, integrity and accountability in all aspects of government, politics and the law.