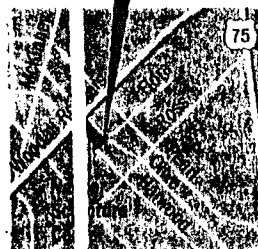


**WEATHER**  
Sunny and warm. High 85, low 59.  
**More on 12B.**  
**TRAFFIC WATCH**

All lanes of Flora Street from Harvard to Olive Street will be closed from 8:30 a.m. Sunday to 4:30 p.m. Monday in preparation for the ribbon-cutting ceremony of the Nasher Sculpture Center.



**WFAA**  
**REAL TIME TRAFFIC**  
coverage on News 8  
daybreak 5 to 7 a.m.  
Traffic updates at WFAA.com

**NOT WORTHY**

## Bridging an erosion problem

The earth is moving under parts of F1382, but the Texas Department of Transportation has a plan to fix it.

For eight years, erosion problems have chipped away at the road side. And for the last two years, the problems have forced the state to close the southbound lane near Joe Pool Lake.

The Transportation

# SECTION B Metropolitan

The Dallas Morning News  
Sunday, October 19, 2003

OVERNIGHT

## Bang the drums

Acoustic pop group Guster drew the college set to a nearly full Granada Theater on Friday with its witty lyrics and bongo drums. **11B**

## Ex-FBI agent says bias led to his firing

Muslim said faith didn't get in the way, blames suspicious 'old-timers'

By **STEVE MCGONIGLE**  
Staff Writer

**FLOWER MOUND** — Gamal Abdel-Hafiz's decade in the FBI was marked by acclaim for his skill as a translator and then as a special agent in Dallas and Saudi Arabia.

But as one of the bureau's first

foreign Muslim agents, he was also a subject of suspicion, criticism and disdain from colleagues he called "old-timers."

Their prejudice, he said, got him fired in late May for behavior that would have been excused or punished less severely had he not been a Muslim.

Now, after a yearlong silence on misconduct allegations lodged by fellow agents and his former wife, Mr. Abdel-Hafiz, 44, said he wants to clear his name.

In an interview at his suburban

home Thursday, the former agent insisted that he never let his faith trump his official duties, nor did he stage a burglary to claim insurance benefits before joining the FBI. His only error — which he blamed on a misunderstanding — was not disclosing a lawsuit he filed over the break-in.

**#6** "I haven't done anything, and I haven't taken anything that is not mine," he said.

Ed Cogswell, an FBI spokesman in Washington, confirmed that Mr. Abdel-Hafiz had been



MONA REEDEI

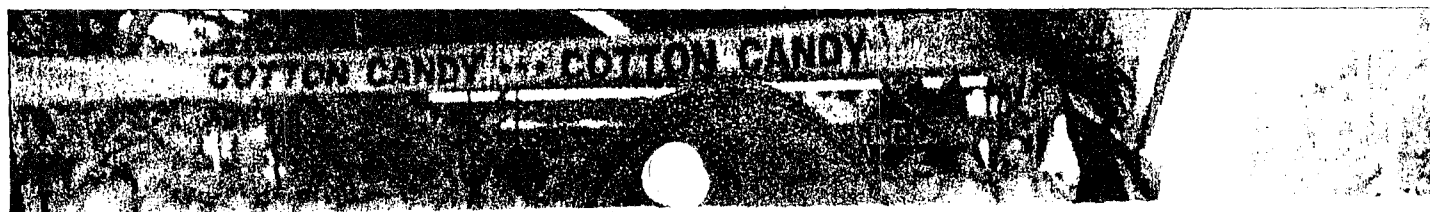
Gamal Abdel-Hafiz was fired from the FBI in May for alleged misconduct. He and his former wife lodged

complaints with the Justice Dept. but said he could not discuss the reasons because of privacy rules.

He did say that as a general

rule, failure to give an applicant on an application

It takes 365 days to get this good stuff ready



Episc  
Dioc  
rote

# Ex-agent says bias led to firing

*Continued from Page 1B*

considered "a lack of candor" which almost always results in termination.

"It goes to your veracity. In terms of being able to testify in court, it certainly goes to your credibility," Mr. Cogswell said.

Because Mr. Abdel-Hafiz has filed an appeal, Mr. Cogswell said, he could not comment on the former agent's accusations that the FBI had acted improperly.

The *Dallas Morning News* reported in April that Mr. Abdel-Hafiz was under investigation by the FBI's internal disciplinary section because of insurance fraud allegations made by his former wife, Bertie, during a routine background investigation.

Two months earlier, the FBI had removed Mr. Abdel-Hafiz from a legal liaison position in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, and placed him on paid administrative leave.

## Ex-wife's story

Ms. Abdel-Hafiz, who divorced in 1996, said she decided to tell the FBI about the old break-in and insurance scam because she was upset about her former husband's life with his new wife and three children.

At the time she made her statement in January 2002, Ms. Abdel-Hafiz was on the verge of filing for bankruptcy. In October 2002, she was arrested on a felony charge of injuring a 9-month-old who had been left in her care.

The 60-year-old North Richland Hills resident could not be reached for comment.

Mr. Abdel-Hafiz described his former wife as an emotionally fragile person who had been under psychiatric care for many years. Nevertheless, he said, they had maintained a cordial relationship since the breakup of their 11-year marriage.

"I told them had she had this fraud scheme against me all along, she would not have waited five minutes," Mr. Abdel-Hafiz said.

Mr. Abdel-Hafiz said he first learned of his former wife's accusations in July 2002, when the FBI informed him that she

*"This outcome was predetermined. This investigation was done in a shameful way to law enforcement."*

**Gamal Abdel-Hafiz, former FBI agent**

probably was an inside job because his former wife had shown the FBI some of the allegedly stolen items, but he denied that he had any role in the break-in or that he intended to defraud his insurance carrier.

He said he did not list a 1991 lawsuit filed against the insurance company because his FBI application asked about involvement in "court action" and he believed that he had only filed a claim with his homeowner's insurance carrier.

The suit was settled in 1994 — a year after Mr. Abdel-Hafiz joined the FBI. He said he and his wife received about \$15,000 and his attorney took the remaining \$10,000.

He said he never intended any cover-up. "I never went to court, and I never knew there was a lawsuit against the insurance," he said.

## Inquiry begins

Mr. Abdel-Hafiz learned he was being investigated on his ex-wife's allegations two months after a Chicago-based FBI agent, Robert Wright, held a news conference in Washington during which he accused an unnamed Muslim agent in Dallas of undermining an investigation into financing of Hamas, a Palestinian terrorist group.

He accused the Dallas agent of refusing to tape the president of an Islamic banking firm who had been summoned before a federal grand jury. "A Muslim does not record another Muslim," Agent Wright quoted the Dallas agent as saying.

Agent Wright cited the incident as an example of what he described as the FBI's incompetence in pursuing terrorism investigations prior to Sept. 11, 2001.

Separate reports last fall by ABC News and *The Wall Street Journal* identified Mr. Abdel-Hafiz as the Muslim agent criticized by Agent Wright.

the FBI as a translator in 1993 before becoming a special agent in February 1996, accused Agent Wright of a bigoted characterization of their conversations in March 1999 about the New Jersey banking official.

The former Dallas agent confirmed that he had refused to make a secret recording of the businessman, but he insisted that his reasons were practical, not religious.

"I have done a lot more than wear a wire on other Muslims," he said.

Simply put, he said, he did not believe that the value of the information he might obtain would outweigh the potential harm to his ability to work in the Muslim community if it became known that he was making secret recordings of his interviews.

"If recording this conversation — legal or illegal — will save one life, I will do it," he said. "But to add one snowflake to a mountain of snow, it doesn't make sense."

Danny Defenbaugh, who at the time was the head of the Dallas FBI office, said he backed the decision not to force Mr. Abdel-Hafiz to wear a tape recorder. He also said he urged his agent to file a religious discrimination complaint against Agent Wright.

That complaint, filed in May 1999, remains pending, Mr. Abdel-Hafiz said.

Less than two years after the incident with Agent Wright, Mr. Abdel-Hafiz was appointed by FBI Director Louis Freeh as assistant legal attaché to the U.S. Embassy in Riyadh. The office was re-

sponsible for liaison with several Persian Gulf nations.

Mr. Abdel-Hafiz said he obtained key confessions in investigations of the suicide bombing of the U.S.S. Cole in 2000 and a Lackawanna, N.Y.-based cell of Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda terrorist organization.

As a counterterrorism agent in Dallas, he had worked on investigations of an Arlington residence linked to the 1998 bombings of two U.S. embassies in East Africa. He also led an investigation of a Richardson charity believed to be a front for Hamas.

## Motive questioned

While he said he had many friends in the FBI, Mr. Abdel-Hafiz said there were also agents who did not believe there was a plan in the FBI for a Muslim agent.

He said the FBI's Office of Professional Responsibility conducted a shoddy investigation and refused to review evidence that contradicted his former wife.

"This outcome was predetermined," he said. "This investigation was done in a shameful way to law enforcement."

He said he was told that he had been fired on May 27 — less than three weeks after making his oral presentation to the FBI hearing board overseeing the case.

Since May, Mr. Abdel-Hafiz said, he has been working to obtain a private investigator's license and start his own business.

He said he knows the chance of rejoining the FBI is slim, but he has to try. If the appeal fails, he said, he plans to file a discrimination lawsuit.

"This is the only way I can regain my dignity and my self-respect," he said.

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**It's like being in the locker room.**

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