

**DallasNews.com***The Dallas Morning News*

## Agent rehired by FBI

### Muslim man had appealed firing, alleging religious prejudice

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By STEVE McGONIGLE / The Dallas Morning News

The FBI, in an extraordinary reversal, has reinstated a Muslim special agent who was fired last year after being accused of lying to hide an insurance fraud scheme.

Gamal Abdel-Hafiz, a former foreign counterterrorism agent in the Dallas FBI office, was informed in late January that he had won an appeal of his termination because the allegations made by his former wife could not be substantiated.

The FBI would not comment Wednesday, but Agent Abdel-Hafiz provided a copy of a letter from an assistant FBI director, which confirmed his reinstatement.

Agent Abdel-Hafiz, who had attributed his dismissal last May to a combination of religious prejudice and internal bureau politics, said he was shocked but gratified that the three-member appeals board had returned his job.

While he conceded that not everyone would welcome his return, Agent Abdel-Hafiz said he was looking forward to getting back to work in the Dallas FBI office, possibly by mid-April.

"It will not be difficult," he said, "because I did not do anything to be ashamed of. Actually, the bureau should be ashamed of what they have done. Not me."

The FBI's change of heart on Agent Abdel-Hafiz was described as a rarity by the agent and four people familiar with FBI disciplinary procedures, under which even minor breaches of policy can result in termination and appeals seldom succeed.

'Extraordinary step'

"It's an absolutely extraordinary step," said Tom Fitton, president of Judicial Watch, a conservative legal group familiar with Agent Abdel-Hafiz's case.

Mr. Fitton said he suspected that the FBI was attempting to resolve what was perceived as an image problem.

"It's unsettling given all the allegations out there about him," Mr. Fitton said.

Agent Abdel-Hafiz, 45, one of the first foreign-born FBI agents, came under scrutiny from the bureau's disciplinary unit in 2002 after being accused by his former wife, Bertie, of faking a home burglary before he joined the FBI.

Several months later, he became the subject of national news reports about a fellow agent's accusations that the Dallas agent refused to tape a terrorism suspect because of a religious belief that "a Muslim does not record another Muslim."

Agent Abdel-Hafiz denied any wrongdoing. He described his former wife, Bertie, as still embittered over their 1996 divorce. He depicted Robert Wright, a fellow FBI counterterrorism agent in Chicago, as a religious bigot.

Initially, the FBI lauded Agent Abdel-Hafiz's professionalism. But soon after the public vote of confidence, he was recalled from a legal liaison assignment in Saudi Arabia and placed on paid leave pending the outcome of the internal investigation.

The internal investigator who recommended his firing concluded that Agent Abdel-Hafiz had shown a "lack of candor" about his former wife's allegations that he staged a home burglary and lied on his FBI job application to conceal the crime.

Agent Abdel-Hafiz acknowledged that he had omitted the lawsuit that he filed over the insurance claim on his FBI application. He described the omission as a misunderstanding that the bureau typically would have excused.

The reinstatement letter from Assistant FBI Director Steven McCraw made no mention of the omission on Agent Abdel-Hafiz's job application.

Agent Abdel-Hafiz said his attorney interpreted the letter as a complete exoneration of all the allegations against him.

"If I'm not accused of these things, that means not putting [the lawsuit] on the application was not intentional," Mr. Abdel-Hafiz said.

He said he had already received congratulatory phone calls from some people in the FBI and was looking forward to resuming his work, no matter what it may be.

"Some people will [be welcoming] and some people won't," he said. "And the people who won't, I will not have any mercy on them. I will have no mercy on anyone who will try to cross me again."

He said he would prefer to continue to work in counterterrorism but recognized that his effectiveness in working with the Muslim community has been compromised by his statement that he would not be reluctant to tape record another Muslim.

"Actually, I would like to do whatever [FBI officials] ask me to do. I'm not going to pick and choose," Agent Abdel-Hafiz said.

Defamation suit

Despite his reinstatement, Agent Abdel-Hafiz said, he would continue to pursue an internal discrimination complaint and a defamation lawsuit he filed in December against Agent Wright.

The lawsuit, filed in Fort Worth in December, also names a former colleague of Agent Wright and ABC News, which first aired the agents' accusations that Agent Abdel-Hafiz had refused their requests to do a secret taping.

David Schippers, a Chicago attorney who represents Agent Wright and former agent John Vincent in other matters, said the reinstatement does not change the validity of the charges that his clients have leveled against Agent Abdel-Hafiz.

"I think what it is is they didn't bring the right charge," Mr. Schippers said. "They didn't bring the insubordination charge. They brought the nitwit charge and probably with the view that he would be reinstated just to let the heat blow over."

Mrs. Abdel-Hafiz, who lives in North Richland Hills, said she was not surprised that the FBI had reinstated her former husband. But neither did she back down.

"I'm regretting ever being married to Gamal," she said. "But I'm not sorry about what I said. Why would I be sorry about the truth?"

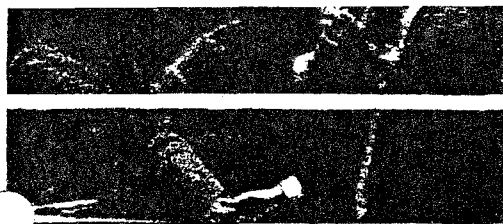
Agent Abdel-Hafiz said he realized that he will have to earn the trust of others one day at a time. But neither does he intend to be intimidated, he said.

"I'm going back with the attitude that I'm not going to have any forgiveness for anyone who is going to step on me," he said. "I'm not going to allow it."

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Online at: <http://www.dallasnews.com/s/dws/wfaa/latestnews/stories/022604dnmetmuslimagent.9a856.html>



Max Wells  
(center) and  
Chris Luna,

awaiting a  
bone  
marrow  
transplant.

FILE 1995/Staff photo

to four terms and she overcame a recall challenge, Ms. Mayes was dogged throughout her political career by critics who said she was an instrument of Dallas' white establishment.

Former Dallas Mayor Ron Kirk said upon learning of her death that his "first thoughts and prayers" were with Ms. Mayes'.

See 'SHE' Page 2B

counseling after getting to FW; hearing set

Fort Worth Bureau

FORT WORTH — Convicted murderer Wesley Wayne Miller violated the terms of his latest parole only a few hours after arriving in Fort Worth on Wednesday, prison officials said.

If a parole panel agrees with state officials, this would be the fourth time that Mr. Miller has violated his parole and been returned to prison.



Wesley Miller

of a cheerleader 22 years ago, refused to speak to

counselor as required in the terms of his parole, said Mike Viesca, a spokesman for the Texas Department of Criminal Justice.

"I don't think we had any indication this would happen" despite Mr. Miller's history, Mr. Viesca said.

But Tarrant County sheriff's offi-

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2-25-04

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Staff Writer

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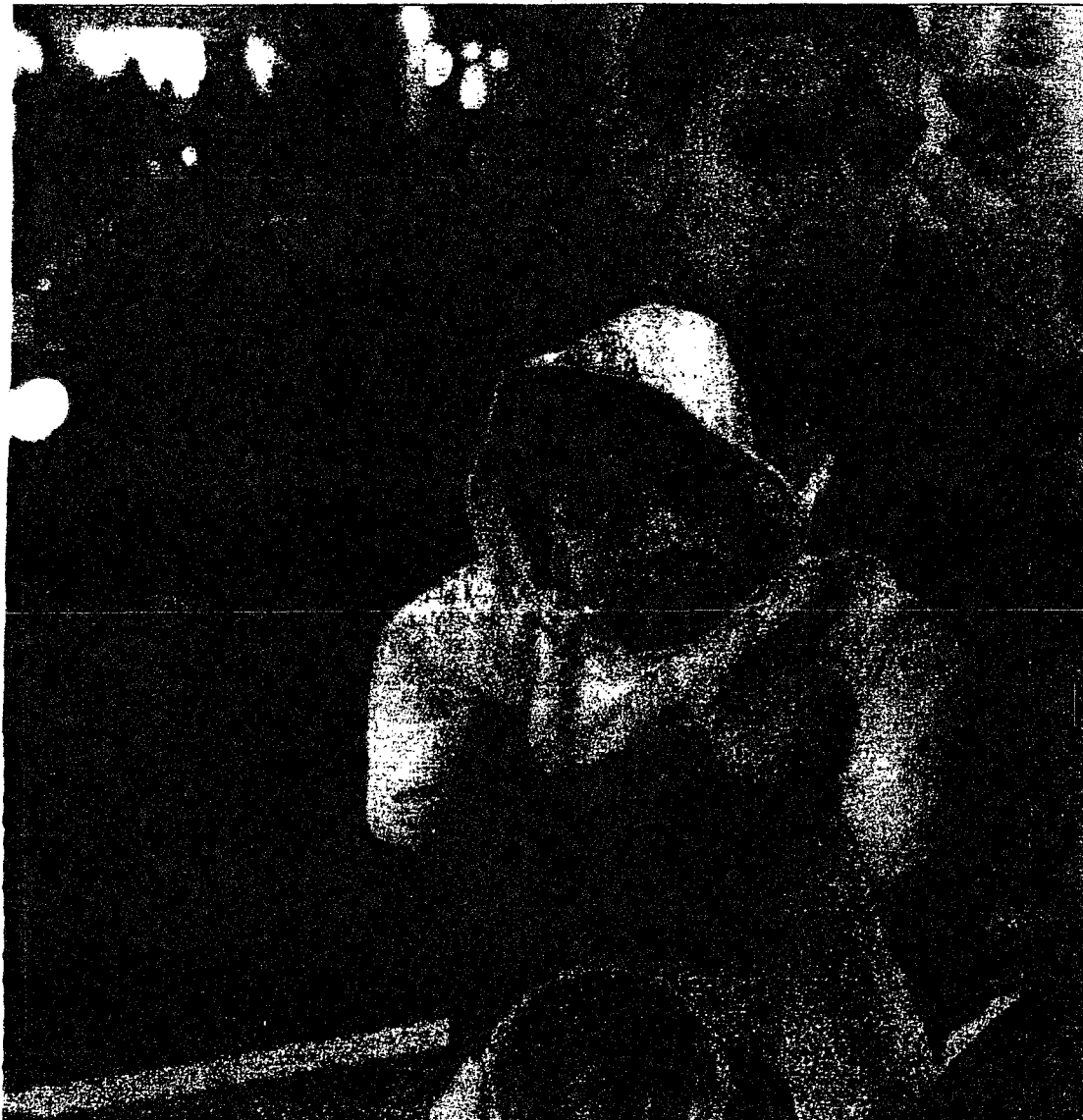
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See FBI Page 8B

## The beginning of Lent



MONA REEDER/Staff Photographer

month-old nephew, Alan Garcia, receive ashes during a noon service at St. Edwards Catholic. Wednesday marked the first day of Lent, a season of Christian penitence and fasting.

st someone special' this week

Ready to

# FBI reinstates Muslim agent fired last year from Dallas office

Continued from Page 1B

job.

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## Gamal Abdel-Hafiz

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Mr. Miller, convicted of the



He refuses sex-offender

## violated parole

Charlotte Mayes, with former Dallas City Council members



## Strong voice on Dallas council

Lauded for devotion to city, she prevailed in recall, served 4 terms

REAL TIME TRAFFIC  
Coverage on News 8  
Daybreak 5 to 7 a.m.  
Traffic updates at WFAA.com

WHAT'S THE DEAL?