

# The Hidden Role of the Fusion Centers in the Nationwide Spying Operation against the Occupy Movement and Peaceful Protest in America

An Initiative of the Partnership for Civil Justice Fund

By [Mara Verheyden-Hilliard](#) and [Carl Messineo](#)

Global Research, May 23, 2014

[Partnership for Civil Justice Fund](#) 22

December 2024

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Intelligence](#), [Police State & Civil Rights](#)

*This report, based on documents obtained by the Partnership for Civil Justice Fund, provides highlights and analysis of how the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)-funded Fusion Centers used their vast anti-terrorism and anti-crime authority and funds to conduct a sprawling, nationwide and hour-by-hour surveillance effort that targeted even the smallest activity of peaceful protestors in the Occupy Movement in the Fall and Winter of 2011.*

It is being released in conjunction with a major story in the New York Times that is based on the 4,000 pages of government documents uncovered by the Partnership for Civil Justice Fund (PCJF) during a two-year long investigation.

The newly published documents reveal the actual workings of the Fusion Centers - created ostensibly to coordinate anti-terrorism efforts following the September 11, 2001, attacks - in collecting and providing surveillance information on peaceful protestors.

The new documents roll back the curtain on the Fusion Centers and show the communications, interactions and emails of a massive national web of federal agents, officials, police, and private "security" contractors to accumulate and share information, reporting on all manner of peaceful and lawful political activity that took place during the Occupy Movement from protests and rallies to meetings and educational lectures. This enormous spying and monitoring apparatus included the Pentagon, FBI, DHS, police departments and chiefs, private contractors and commercial business interests.

There is now, with the release of these documents, incontrovertible evidence of systematic and not incidental conduct and practices of the Fusion Centers and their personnel to direct their sights against a peaceful movement that advocated social and economic justice in the United States. It bears noting also that while these 4,000 pages offer the most significant and largest window into the U.S. intelligence and law enforcements' coordinated targeting of Occupy, they can only be a portion of what is likely many more tens of thousands of pages of materials generated by the nationwide operation.

Until now the role of the Fusion Centers in their application of anti-terrorism authority and resources has been shrouded in secrecy. In 2012, the Senate issued an investigative report on the Fusion Centers that The Washington Post described as revealing "pools of ineptitude, waste and civil liberties intrusions." The Department of Homeland Security immediately

dismissed and “condemned the report and defended the fusion centers, saying the Senate investigators relied on out-of-date data,” from 2009 and 2010, and prior years of materials. The public was not privy to the records underlying that investigation, however, the documents that the Senate reviewed predated the documents that the Partnership for Civil Justice Fund has obtained and made public. The newly released documents show that the Department of Homeland Security’s representations were far from true, that the conduct of the Fusion Centers continued unabated.

The American people can now see for themselves how the U.S. government and the Department of Homeland Security are spending hundreds of millions of dollars of their money in Fusion Center operations. These documents, along with materials previously released by the PCJF that exposed the FBI and other domestic intelligence and law enforcement agencies’ targeting of Occupy, reveal a U.S. surveillance-industrial apparatus charging forward in willful disregard for the fundamental civil liberties and political freedoms of the people. Targeting a peaceful social justice movement as a criminal or terrorist enterprise is incompatible with a constitutional democracy.



These documents show that the Fusion Centers constitute a menace to democracy. This gross misuse of U.S. taxpayers’ money also demonstrates that the Fusion Centers are a colossal rat hole of waste. The Fusion Centers should be defunded and ended immediately.

Coinciding with the publication of these new documents and this report, the Partnership for Civil Justice Fund has initiated a nationwide campaign to [End the Fusion Centers!](#) The campaign includes a mass email and letter-writing effort to President Obama and all members of Congress calling on them to defund and end the Fusion Centers. As part of the End the Fusion Centers campaign and to broaden awareness of the dangers posed by the Fusion Centers, the PCJF has also made the new documents fully available to the public and to the media in searchable format at [BigBrotherAmerica.org](#).

### **Anti-Terrorism Resources Devoted to Spy on Occupy Movement; Major City Police Chiefs Used Southern Nevada Counter Terrorism Center to Produce Regular National Reports on Occupy Movement**

Although the Fusion Centers’ existence is justified by the DHS as a necessary component in stopping terrorism and violent crime, the documents show that the Fusion Centers in the Fall of 2011 and Winter of 2012 were devoted to unconstrained targeting of a grassroots movement for social change that was acknowledged to be peaceful in character.

The documents reveal that [the police chiefs of major U.S. cities created an “Emerging Issues” Subcommittee](#) to “identify, research and document trends or activities that may threaten public safety” for communication to the nationwide network of Fusion Centers and that “The first issue the committee is working is the Occupy Movement.” The documents show that the Major Cities Chiefs (MCC) efforts to “increase situational awareness and promote public safety” required “twice a week”-produced bulletins on the Occupy Movement. “At the present time it is our intention to utilize the services of the Southern Nevada Counter Terrorism Center to collect, analyze and disseminate bulletins twice a week.”

The [distribution list for these Fusion Center-issued bulletins](#) includes virtually every single Fusion Center in the United States.

## **Investigating Terrorism in Boston: The Boston Regional Intelligence Center Monitored and Catalogued Occupy-Associated Activities from Student Organizing to Political Lectures**

In the Fall of 2011, the Boston Regional Intelligence Center (BRIC) devoted significant resources including deployment of intelligence analysts to a detailed monitoring and cataloging operation, issuing twice-daily "Situation Awareness" Bulletins on Occupy Boston. We have [obtained over 1,200 pages of these bulletins](#) which have not been previously disclosed.

We need your help! PCJF attorneys have worked for years to expose the government's use of counter-terrorism authority to carry out illegal spying on peace and social justice movements, including the Occupy movement. [Please make an urgently needed tax-deductible contribution to support these efforts in defense of freedom, dissent and constitutional rights.](#)

The BRIC intelligence analysts monitored Occupy activists' Twitter accounts and poured over Facebook pages constantly reporting and then repeatedly providing updates on the number of people who may have indicated they would be attending any event or lecture. The BRIC documents [catalogued plans and meetings, including labor rallies and activities by nurses, the Professional Fire Fighters of Massachusetts \(AFL-CIO\), and Verizon workers;](#) student organizing and meetings at Boston University, Suffolk, Harvard, Tufts and throughout the area ("Analyst Notes: Tufts students are organizing a group to go to Dudley Square to show support for the Occupy the Hood ... As of 3:00 p.m. on 20 October 2011, 35 people are listed as attending, 9 maybes on the Facebook event page"); speakers, authors, personalities and lecturers, including Noam Chomsky, writer/director David Rothauer ("Analyst note: ... It is unknown at this time if Rothauer is a known/respected figure within the anarchist movement"), Bill McKibben ("Analyst note: ... [he] organized a sit-in near the White House in August of this year to protest construction of a pipeline."), Russell Simmons, Van Jones, Brian Wilson of VFP, representatives from the National Lawyers Guild, the National Police Accountability Project and the ACLU-Mass. From musical concerts to women's caucus meetings, to yoga, to meetings and lectures on college campuses nothing was outside the purview of the Boston Fusion Center's supposed anti-terrorism and anti-crime mandate and vast resources.

The PCJF had previously obtained and exposed a handful of documents of a different nature showing BRIC's reporting on Occupy, which investigative reporter Michael Isikoff of NBC News noted in an article "Unaware of Tsarnaev warnings, Boston counterterror unit tracked protesters." What was less known from the earlier documents but revealed in the new massive BRIC document release was the immense scope and intensity of hour-by-hour reporting on the Occupy Movement indicating not only an interest but an actual preoccupation with intelligence gathering on all manner of political speech, meeting, thought and expression affiliated with Occupy.

The Boston Police Department stated in 2012, according to The Boston Globe, that the "Boston Regional Intelligence Center ... does not conduct surveillance on protest groups without reason to believe they are tied to crime or terrorism." [An email, in the newly released documents](#), from a high level official in the Washington Regional Threat and Analysis Center (D.C. Fusion Center) in December of 2011, and sent to D.C. police officials, states:

"I just received a call from the City of Boston. I was informed that a group of 15-20 Occupy Boston members and other activist group members departed Boston by bus this morning on their way to the District for a 'Week of Action.' According to the caller, none of the people are 'known to be troublemakers.'"

### **Pentagon and Dept. of Defense Worked Through Fusion Centers to Target Occupy Movement**

The documents show that the Pentagon and the Department of Defense personnel were conducting their own surveillance on the Occupy Movement and also used the infrastructure of the Fusion Centers to provide information to local and federal law enforcement agencies.

Involved in the monitoring and reporting operation on Occupy Wall Street was the Pentagon's agency that specializes in "countering weapons of mass destruction" worldwide. The Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA), whose official mission is to "address the entire spectrum of chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and high yield explosive threats," regularly used the Fusion Centers as the vehicle to share information on the Occupy Movement.

This Pentagon agency that exists to counter threats from weapons of mass destruction circulated material on Occupy including, for example, one document with the subject line: ["FW: Alert Update! Chicago ... What Police Should Be Learning From The Occupy Protests."](#) This document shows in an email chain that this article was initially circulated through the subscription website activistmap.com, which is billed as the "Domestic Terrorism Tracking System." The keywords associated with this Domestic Terrorism Tracking System include: anarchist(s), animal rights, environmentalist, protesters, socialist(s), communist(s), civil disobedience, social justice and global justice, among others.

[Another example of information circulated](#) from the Pentagon's WMD agency was about plans for peaceful protests in Washington, D.C, in early December 2011 including "a national prayer vigil with unemployed folks and faith leaders" that was to be followed by "a mass march on Congressional leaders."

In one [document](#), an Intelligence Research Specialist with the Threat Analysis Center at the Pentagon's Force Protection Agency forwards the advice that "anyone having an Occupy Wallstreet type problem in their city" could set up a surveillance operation using social media to maintain constant review of all Twitter tweets and Facebook postings about Occupy Wall Street.

Her email circulates the advice that to constantly monitor the social media communications of Occupy activists:

"you set up a computer and someone to monitor it, they simply type in 'site:twitter.com occupy "city here"' and they will get feeds of people posting about the occupy movement in that city. Same goes for Facebook. Use 'facebook.com occupy "city here"' and all of the facebook postings appear. A very handy intel gathering tool. If they have a dual screen set up like I do you can have both open and simply hit refresh every so often and you get the new tweets and postings from the sites."

### **The Terrorist Threat to U.S. National Security: Black Friday Consumer Boycotts**

The documents reveal that Fusion Centers and their personnel even conflate their anti-

terrorism mission with a need for intelligence gathering on a possible consumer boycott during the holiday season. There are multiple documents from across the country referencing concerns about negative impacts on retail sales.

The Executive Director of the Intelligence Fusion Division, also the Joint Terrorism Task Force Director, for the D.C. Metropolitan Police Department [circulated a 30-page report tracking the Occupy Movement](#) in towns and cities across the country created by the trade association the International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC).

He directed that the recipients of the document, who included top staff at the Washington, D.C. Fusion Center, “develop a one page product that we can send to our District Commanders to make them aware of the potential threat.”

The ICSC report detailing Occupy Black Friday “threats” includes images of “Sample Anti-Black Friday Icons and Posters” with slogans urging people to “buy local” or “do your shopping at a small independent merchant.” The report identifies among “Specific Known Threats” “buy nothing day tactics which might be used by Occupy and other protesters” including credit card cut ups, free non-commercial street parties, and alternative mass green transport activities.

Additional “Specific Known Threats” in the report are identified by individual Occupy locations from Occupy Bee Cave, Texas (“Assessment ... Aim: to educate how military spending has affected the economy - consistent with anti-war agenda of the group”) to Occupy Seattle (“Assessment ... leafleting likely in order to draw attention”).

The intelligence reporting and communications apparatus was in full throttle over potential Occupy Black Friday boycotts. One sample document issued from the Baltimore police [shows a distribution list](#) ranging from the Maryland Fusion Center, the FBI, the DHS, the Middle Atlantic-Great Lakes Organized Crime Law Enforcement Network, the Secret Service, the NYPD and other city and state law enforcement, the manager of corporate security for an energy company, university personnel, and the Federal Reserve.

The “counter-terrorism” documents contain multiple references to Black Friday boycotts as well as potential negative impacts on retail sales.

### **Let’s Go Down to Occupy Encampment to “hear some tunes and get laid”: Communication from Washington, D.C. Fusion Center Official to Maryland Fusion Center Official**

One [document reveals the shared communications](#) about Occupy between an “anti-terrorism” official from the Baltimore Police Department who is assigned to the Maryland Fusion Center and an official (and private contractor) with the Washington Regional Threat Analysis Center. The Baltimore police official, who also circulated through the Fusion Centers hostile and false anti-Occupy materials published by a politically conservative group, says in response to the D.C. official’s suggestion that they should go to Baltimore Occupy events and “hear some tunes and get laid” that “I’m all over that...for Halloween I am going as a Occupy protestor...Baltimore Sunday and Annapolis Monday ...” [ellipsis in original].

### **Scared When the “Watched” Start Watching the Watchers**

Aware that Fusion Centers’ spying operations on First Amendment protected activity and peaceful protest is contrary to their stated anti-terrorism mission, the documents reveal the

sense of alarm communicated by Fusion Center officials when Occupy activists speculate about the role of the Fusion Centers in the crackdown on Occupy through social media. The Deputy Director of the Washington Threat and Analysis Center sent an email to “fusion center partners” titled [“Open Source Media Discussing Fusion Centers and Crackdowns on the Occupy Movement”](#) about “articles referencing possible fusion center involvement in coordinating police response and subsequent violence.” She warns, “Although at this time these references to fusion centers and Occupy seems to be compartmentalized I wanted to make you aware of these references in case the national news media begins speculating about fusion center involvement.” This Fusion Center director sent out “an Excel file of about 2700 open source news items from the last 24-48 hours containing ‘Occupy’” created by her “friend” who publishes [globalincidentmap.com](#) (and the previously described [activistmap.com](#)).

A small sampling of the tweets are included in the text of the email, many of which are about Pacifica radio’s flagship show Democracy Now having broadcast discussion on the possible involvement of the Fusion Centers in the crackdown on the Occupy Movement.

### **Watching the PCJF**

Documents released to us show that one DHS Commander subscribes to the Partnership for Civil Justice Fund’s constituent emails through his personal email account, forwards our emails to his Department of Homeland Security account and then circulates them on to other law enforcement personnel. Among [our emails meriting Homeland Security importance](#) was an announcement that filmmaker and author Michael Moore was supporting our public advocacy campaign calling on the Manhattan District Attorney to drop the charges against the 700 peaceful protestors who had been mass arrested on the Brooklyn Bridge on October 1, 2011 (the PCJF is also litigating the class action constitutional rights suit from those arrests.)

### **A Well-Funded Surveillance-Industrial Complex on a Mission to Justify its Exponential Funding**

The documents reveal a feverish urgency to collect and share as much information as possible on any manifestation of protest. The Deputy Director of the Washington Regional Threat and Analysis Center, the [Fusion Center in Washington, D.C., circulated a constituent email from the anti-war organization ANSWER Coalition](#) endorsing a demonstration by postal workers outside the National Press Club against layoffs and post office closings.

Other documents show the intensity of communications between the various local and regional Fusion Centers who seem to be frantic to publish regular Occupy “product” that can be shared with other agency officials, local police officials and a large seemingly duplicative network of Fusion Center POC’s (Point of Contact) who are similarly tasked to produce and receive similar reports. The focus of this large, duplicative reporting apparatus concerns even the most trivial details about the smallest activity.

For example, the Nashville-based Fusion Center Point of Contact, in one of many such documents, [asks other Fusion Centers around the country to fill out an elaborate reporting form](#) to compile a report to Nashville police chiefs the next day. The agent requests information from officials in the Washington, D.C., Fusion Center because “I’ve been tasked to produce an overview of Occupy movement activities in various cities around the nation, to be disseminated to all our [Nashville] Chiefs tomorrow morning at 1000 hrs.” The Nashville requestor asks for detailed information from the other cities: were there marches

in Occupy activities, were there signs and banners, identification of specific political issues raised, did the activists give interviews to the media, did they hold regular General Assembly meetings, did local law enforcement agencies communicate with local civil rights organizations, and did “dealing directly with these organizations” result in any benefits or reveal pitfalls.

At another point the [Washington, D.C., Fusion Center sent out a request to other Fusion Centers](#) including to the Florida Fusion Center (Central Florida Intelligence Exchange, Counterterrorism Unit) seeking “products on the Occupy Movement ... so we can take a look at what is happening around the country.” The Florida Fusion Center representative replies that she is “working on a product that I plan on having out by Thursday.”

Throughout the documents, which contain even more information than highlighted here, the constant effort for “product” to be written and reviewed is strongly suggestive that the officials themselves feel pressed to justify the large funding stream that keeps them in business.

The documents reveal intelligence officials in government and police agencies partnering with each other and with a myriad of private security contractors in a self-perpetuating and symbiotic system that provides an endless stream of funding for the participants. The documents show the role of private “intelligence” and surveillance corporations that apparently have contracts with or provide subscription services to law enforcement personnel and who also monitor and provide information on protest activities, another improper mass diversion of taxpayers’ funds. Many of the private contractors have cycled in and out of government employment, and the documents show that there are personnel using government email addresses, including fbi.gov suffixes, who actually are private contractors.

The fact that the Fusion Centers and this same cast of government and private sector actors reflexively went into full throttle against a peaceful protest movement demonstrates not only institutional hostility to a grassroots movement for social justice but the hollowness of their stated mission of combating terrorism.

### **The Fusion Centers are Incompatible with Democracy and Must Be Ended**

The new Fusion Center documents demonstrate the workings of a self-perpetuating Surveillance-Industrial Complex. In the name of fighting terrorism, and with ever-regular admonitions to the American public that these institutions must be given a blank check in the name of national security, a limitless funding stream flows from the American people into the pockets of those who profit and benefit from this system. These documents reveal what our money is being wasted on and, critically, how it is being used in derogation of our fundamental rights and liberties.

The people of the United States do not want to live as a nation under constant surveillance, targeted by government counterterrorism and intelligence agencies when they engage in the exercise of basic rights to free speech. The American people have the right and ability to decide the nature of the society in which they live. We are calling on elected officials to defend the Constitution and democratic rights by defunding and ending the Fusion Centers. [Take action and join the campaign to end the Fusion Centers now!](#)

- [Read the Documents](#)



- [Download the PDFs](#)

[Download and view the PDFs](#) in Acrobat to see the documents with certain links and metadata that is not visible in the versions embedded online.

- [Take Action](#)

[Take action now!](#)

- [Download a PDF of this report](#)



– See more at:  
<http://www.justiceonline.org/one-nation-under-surveillance/report.html#sthash.1brbtJN2.dpu>  
f

The original source of this article is [Partnership for Civil Justice Fund](#)  
Copyright © [Mara Verheyden-Hilliard](#) and [Carl Messineo](#), [Partnership for Civil Justice Fund](#),  
2014

---

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: **[Mara Verheyden-Hilliard](#)** and  
**[Carl Messineo](#)**

**Disclaimer:** The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: [publications@globalresearch.ca](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)  
[www.globalresearch.ca](http://www.globalresearch.ca) contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: [publications@globalresearch.ca](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)