

Top U.S. Terrorist Group: the FBI

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[War is a crime](#)

Region: [USA](#)

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

A careful study of the FBI's own data on terrorism in the United States, reported in Trevor Aaronson's book *The Terror Factory*, finds one organization leading all others in creating terrorist plots in the United States: the FBI. Imagine an incompetent bureaucrat. Now imagine a corrupt one. Now imagine both combined. You're starting to get at the image I take away of some of the FBI agents' actions recounted in this book.

Now imagine someone both dumb enough to be manipulated by one of those bureaucrats and hopelessly criminal, often sociopathic, and generally at the mercy of the criminal or immigration courts. Now you're down to the level of the FBI informant, of which we the Sacred-Taxpayers-Who-Shall-Defund-Our-Own-Retirement employ some 15,000 now, dramatically more than ever before. And we pay them very well.

Then try to picture someone so naive, incompetent, desperate, out-of-place, or deranged as to be manipulable by an FBI informant. Now you're at the level of the evil terrorist masterminds out to blow up our skyscrapers.

Well, not really. They're actually almost entirely bumbling morons who couldn't tie their own shoes or buy the laces without FBI instigation and support. The FBI plants the ideas, makes the plans, provides the fake weapons and money, creates the attempted act of terrorism, makes an arrest, and announces the salvation of the nation.

Over and over again. The procedure has become so regular that intended marks have spotted the sting being worked on them simply by googling the name or phone number of the bozo pretending to recruit them into the terrorist brotherhood, and discovering that he's a serial informant.

Between 911 and August, 2011, the U.S. government prosecuted 508 people for terrorism in the United States. 243 had been targeted using an FBI informant. 158 had been caught in an FBI terrorism sting. 49 (that we know of, FBI recording devices have completely unbelievable patterns of "malfunctioning") had encountered an agent provocateur. Most of the rest charged with "terrorism" had little or nothing to do with terrorism at all, most of them charged with more minor offenses like immigration offenses or making false statements. Three or four people out of the whole list appear to be men whom one would reasonably call terrorists in the commonly accepted sense of the word. They intended to and had something at least approaching the capacity to engage in acts of terrorism.

These figures are not far off the percentages of Guantanamo prisoners or drone strike victims believed to be guilty of anything resembling what they've been accused of. So, we shouldn't single out the FBI for criticism. But it should receive its share.

Here's how U.S. District Judge Colleen McMahon understood a case that seems all too

typical:

“The essence of what occurred here is that a government, understandably zealous to protect its citizens from terrorism, came upon a man both bigoted and suggestible, one who was incapable of committing an act of terrorism on his own. It created acts of terrorism out of his fantasies of bravado and bigotry, and then made those fantasies come true. . . . I suspect that real terrorists would not have bothered themselves with a person who was so utterly inept.”

When we hear on television that the FBI has prevented a plot to blow up a crowded area of a big U.S. city, we either grow terrified and grateful, or we wait for the inevitable revelation that the FBI created the plot from start to finish, manipulating some poor fool who had zero contact with foreign terrorists and more often than not participated unwittingly or for the money offered him. But even those of us who do the latter might find Aaronson’s survey of this phenomenon stunning.

During some of its heretofore darkest days the FBI didn’t use informants like it does now. J. Edgar Hoover’s informants just observed and reported. They didn’t instigate. That practice took off during the war on drugs in the 1980s. But the assumption that a drug dealer might have done the same thing without the FBI’s sting operation is backed up by some statistics. There is no evidence to back up the idea that the unemployed grocery bagger and video game player who sees visions, has never heard of major Islamic terrorist groups, can’t purchase a gun with thousands of dollars in cash and instructions on how to purchase a gun, understands terrorism entirely from the insights of Hollywood movies, and who has no relevant skills or resources, is going to blow up a building without help from the FBI.

(Which came first, the FBI’s terror factory or Hollywood’s is a moot question now that they feed off each other so well.)

Read this book, I’m telling you, we’re looking at people who’ve been locked away for decades who couldn’t have found their ass with two hands and a map. These cases more than anything else resemble those of mentally challenged innocent men sitting on death rows because they tried to please the police officer asking them to confess to a crime they clearly knew nothing about.

Of course the press conferences announcing the convictions of drug dealers and “terrorists” are equally successful. They also equally announce an ongoing campaign doomed to failure. The campaign for “terrorists” developed under President George W. Bush and expanded, like so much else, under President Barack Obama.

Aaronson spoke with J. Stephen Tidwell, former executive assistant director at the FBI. Tidwell argued that someone thinking about the general idea of committing crimes should be set up and then prosecuted, because as long as they’re not in prison the possibility exists that someone other than the FBI could encourage them to, and assist them in, actually committing a crime. “You and I could sit here, go online, and by tonight have a decent bomb built. What do you do? Wait for him to figure it out himself?”

The answer, based on extensive data, is quite clearly that he will not figure it out himself and act on it. That the FBI has stopped 3 acts of terrorism is believable. But that the FBI has stopped 508 and there wasn’t a 509th is just not possible. The explanation is that there

haven't been 509 or even 243. The FBI has manufactured terrorist plots by the dozens, including most of the best known ones. (And if you watched John Brennan's confirmation hearing, you know that the underwear bomber and other "attacks" not under the FBI's jurisdiction have been no more real.)

Arthur Cummings, former executive assistant director of the FBI's National Security Branch, told Aaronson that the enemy was not Al Qaeda or Islamic Terrorism, but the idea of it. "We're at war with an idea," he said. But his strategy seems to be one of consciously attempting to lose hearts and minds. For the money spent on infiltrations and stings, the U.S. government could have given every targeted community free education from preschool to college, just as it could do for every community at home and many abroad by redirecting war spending. When you're making enemies of people rather than friends, to say that you're working against an idea is simply to admit that you're not targeting people based on a judicial review finding any probable cause to legally do so.

The drug war's failure can be calculated in the presence of drugs, although the profits for prisons and other profiteers aren't universally seen as failures. The FBI's counterterrorism can be calculated as a failure largely because of the waste of billions of dollars on nonexistent terrorism. But there's also the fact that the FBI's widespread use of informants, very disproportionately in Muslim communities, has made ordinary people who might provide tips hesitant to do so for fear of being recruited as informants. Thus "counter terrorism" may make it harder to counter terrorism. It may also feed into real terrorism by further enraging people already outraged by U.S. foreign policy. But it's no failure at all if measured by the dollars flowing into the FBI, or the dollars flowing into the pockets of informants who get paid by commission (that is, based on convictions in court of their marks). Nor do weapons makers, other war profiteers, or other backers of right wing politics in general seem to be objecting in any way to the production of widespread fear and bigotry.

Congressman Stephen Lynch has introduced a bill that would require federal law enforcement agencies to report to Congress twice a year on all serious crimes, authorized or unauthorized, committed by informants (who are often much more dangerous criminals than are those they're informing on). The bill picked up a grand total of zero cosponsors last Congress and has reached the same mark thus far in the current one.

The corporate media cartel has seen its ratings soar with each new phony incident. Opposition to current practice does not seem to be coming from that quarter.

And let's all be clear with each other: our society is tolerating this because the victims are Muslims. With many other minority groups we would all be leaping to their defense.

It may be time to try thinking of Muslims as Samaritans, as of course some of them are.

David Swanson's books include "[War Is A Lie](http://www.warisacrime.org)." He blogs at <http://davidswanson.org> and <http://warisacrime.org> and works for <http://rootsaction.org>. He hosts [Talk Nation Radio](http://talknationradio.com). Follow him on Twitter: [@davidcnswanson](https://twitter.com/davidcnswanson) and [FaceBook](https://www.facebook.com/davidcnswanson).

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