

US Peace and Civil Rights Activists added to Data Base of Terrorist Suspects

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Maryland troopers spied on activist groups

Protesters added to database of terrorist suspects

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Undercover Maryland state troopers infiltrated three groups advocating peace and protesting the death penalty — attending meetings and sending reports on their activities to [U.S.](#) intelligence and military agencies, according to documents released Thursday.

The documents show the activities occurred from at least March 2005 to May 2006 and that officers used false names, which the documents referred to as “covert identities” - to open e-mail accounts to receive messages from the groups.

Also included in the 46 pages of documents, obtained by the Maryland chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union through a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit, is an account of an activist’s name being entered into a federally funded database designed to share information among state, local and federal law-enforcement agencies on terrorist and drug trafficking suspects.

ACLU attorney [David Rocah](#) said state police violated federal laws prohibiting departments that receive federal funds from maintaining databases with information about political activities and affiliations.

The activist was identified as Max Obuszewski. His “primary crime” was entered into the database as “terrorism - anti govern(ment).” His “secondary crime” was listed as “terrorism - anti-war protestors.” The database is known as the Washington-Baltimore High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area, or HIDTA.

“This is not supposed to happen in America,” said Mr. Rocah. “In a free society, which relies on the engagement of citizens in debate and protest and political activity to maintain that freedom ... you should be able to attend a meeting about an issue you care about without having to worry that government spies are entering your name into a database used to track alleged terrorists and drug traffickers.”

Mr. Rocah called the surveillance “Kafka-esque insanity.”

State police Chief Col. Terrence B. Sheridan said the agency “does not inappropriately curtail the expression or demonstration of the civil liberties of protesters or organizations acting lawfully.”

The surveillance of [Mr. Obuszewski](#), of Pledge of Resistance-Baltimore, and another person came to light during his trial for trespassing and disorderly conduct in a 2004 protest outside the National Security Agency’s headquarters in Fort Meade, Md.

Documents released by the prosecution revealed that the protesters had been under surveillance by an entity called the Baltimore Intelligence Unit.

The Maryland ACLU sued last month, claiming the state police refused to release public documents about the surveillance of peace activists.

THE BALTIMORE SUN VIA ASSOCIATED PRESS ACLU staff attorney David Rocah (sitting left) was alongside organizer Max Obuszewski, whose name was entered into a counterterrorism database, at a press conference in Baltimore.

The documents, which include intelligence reports and printouts from the database, show that several undercover officers from the state police’s Homeland Security and Intelligence Division attended meetings of three groups: Mr. Obuszewski’s group; the Coalition to End the Death Penalty; and the Committee to Save Vernon Evans, a convicted murderer who was slated for execution.

The documents show at least 288 hours of surveillance over the 14-month period. The undercover officers attended at least 20 organizing meetings at community halls and churches and a dozen rallies against the death penalty, including several at the state’s SuperMax jail in Baltimore.

Included in the documents are references to a proposed sit-in at the offices of Baltimore County State’s Attorney Sandra A. O’Connor. However, they show no trooper reports of violence or threats of violence. Organizers repeatedly stressed the importance of peaceful and orderly demonstrations, the documents show.

“There were about 75-80 protestors at the rally and none participated in any type of civil disobedience or illegal acts,” said one report of a demonstration against the death penalty at the SuperMax jail. “Protesters were even careful to move out of the way for Division of Correction employees who were going into the parking lot for work.”

Still, information about the protesters and their activities was sent to seven agencies, including the National Security Agency and an unnamed military intelligence official.

“Americans have the right to peaceably assemble with others of a like mind and speak out about what they believe in,” Mr. Rocah said. “For state agencies to spend hundreds of hours entering information about lawful and peaceful political activities into a criminal database is beyond unconscionable. It is a waste of taxpayer dollars, which does nothing to make us safer from actual terrorists or drug dealers.”



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