

**Records reveal Boston Police spy on political and peace groups**

Officers monitor peaceful activists, labeling legal activities as "extremist" and "homeland security" threats.

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BOSTON -- Boston Police routinely spy on ordinary citizens engaged in peaceful, First Amendment-protected activity, creating criminal "intelligence reports" on lawful political activity of peace groups and local leaders, according to public records and surveillance video released today by the National Lawyers Guild Massachusetts Chapter and the American Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts.

Boston Police officers make video recordings of peaceful demonstrations and track activists as well as the internal workings of political groups--even when there is no indication of criminal activity or a threat to public safety. The documents reveal that officers assigned to the BPD's regional domestic spying center, the Boston Regional Intelligence Center (BRIC), file so-called "intelligence reports" mischaracterizing peaceful groups such as Veterans for Peace, United for Justice with Peace and CodePink as "extremists," and peaceful protests as domestic "homeland security" threats and civil disturbances. These searchable records are retained for years, in violation of federal regulations, and were turned over to the ACLU and NLG only after they sued for access on behalf of local peace groups and activists.

One police report, dated March 23, 2007, for example, details a church panel in Jamaica Plain organized by a former Boston City Councilor and an anti-war rally on the Boston Common featuring the late Boston University Professor Howard Zinn, under the label: "Criminal Act: Groups-Extremist."

"Spying on church groups and peaceful, non-violent, political gatherings violates civil liberties, wastes scarce police resources and doesn't keep us safe," said Carol Rose, Executive Director of the ACLU of Massachusetts. "Such tracking and retention of documents about people and groups engaged in peaceful assembly and constitutionally protected speech violates the Boston Police Department's privacy rules, federal privacy regulations and our democratic system of government."

"We are becoming a country with characteristics typically seen in the most undemocratic states--where police and other law enforcement forces assume unlimited powers over the people," said Urszula Masny-Latos, Executive Director of the National Lawyers Guild. "At a time when schools are inadequately funded, roads and bridges are falling apart and all social services are experiencing severe cuts, we are showering law enforcement agencies with unprecedented resources, which are used to harass, intimidate and monitor the public."

In late 2010, several organizations and activists filed public requests seeking to understand BPD's surveillance practices and privacy protections. When the BPD refused to turn over the public records, the ACLU and NLG filed suit. Plaintiffs included Political Research Associates, Veterans for Peace-Chapter 9 Smedley Butler Brigade, CodePink of Greater Boston, the Boston Coalition for Palestinian Rights, the Greater Boston Stop the Wars Coalition and United for Justice with Peace, as well as individual activists.

Release of the ACLU-NLG report and documents comes on the heels of a bi-partisan Senate investigation report released October 3, which found that the federal government's work with state and local fusion centers--among them, the BRIC--"has not produced useful intelligence to support Federal counterterrorism efforts."

## NEWS RELEASE

"The fact that police are keeping tabs on members of the public just because of our political activities shows that self-regulation is not enough," said Patrick Keaney, a plaintiff in the lawsuit. "We have to demand that the BPD stops immediately the practice of spying and monitoring activists and creates mechanisms for transparency and accountability."

*To view the documents released today, as well as a short video, and our report analyzing the documents, go to:*

<http://www.nlgmass.org>  
[http://aclum.org/policing\\_dissent](http://aclum.org/policing_dissent)

*For more information about the National Lawyers Guild Massachusetts Chapter, go to:*  
<http://www.nlgmass.org>

*For background on the public records lawsuit, ACLU v. Davis, go to:*  
[http://aclum.org/aclu\\_v\\_davis](http://aclum.org/aclu_v_davis)

*For more information about the ACLU of Massachusetts, go to:*  
<http://www.aclum.org>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GVbw7wFu62w&feature=youtu.be>