

UNSOUND METHODS

Via Steve Gilliard I see we're still using unsound methods to create ourselves some informers.

The story of the San Francisco resident [Yassine Ouassif] — a security guard and part-time engineering student — is in some ways unremarkable. He is one of many immigrants investigated, yet not charged or deported, in the post-Sept. 11 era. But his case reveals a lesser-known aspect of the war on terror: the federal government's high-stakes — some say coercive — tactics to recruit Muslim collaborators.

Ouassif treaded water for seven months in a murky administrative netherworld — facing vague accusations of terrorist activity, but granted no court hearing — while he says he was pressed aggressively to become an informant.

[snip]

But lawyers and local Islamic leaders in California cite at least a dozen recent cases of clients who were aggressively encouraged to become informants after they were detained for minor visa violations.

"They are trying to cultivate and exploit innocent people, enticing them, bribing them, tricking them in all these ways to snitch and spy," said Shakeel Syed, executive director of the 70-mosque Islamic Shura Council of Southern California.

I say "still using unsound methods" because at different times reasonably knowledgeable people have explained that our "unsound methods" in Abu Ghraib and Gitmo were designed, at least partially, to create informants. Particularly

with Abu Ghraib, when we were faced with an Iraqi insurgency that we couldn't infiltrate (not least, I'm sure, because we've thrown so many Arabic speakers out on Don't Ask Don't Tell violations), we humiliated people detained randomly so that we could later use to blackmail them. Take pictures of an Iraqi man covered in feces and wearing woman's underwear on his head, and chances are he's going to try to prevent you from circulating those pictures in his community.