

JOURNALISTS NAME FORMER DC USA AS HATFILL LEAKER

Apparently, at least some of the journalists who reported that Steven Hatfill was a "person of interest" in the anthrax investigation have revealed their sources (after being released by those sources).

Attorneys for the former Army physician who was branded a "person of interest" in the deadly 2001 anthrax mailings named three federal officials Friday who they said leaked investigative details that harmed their client.

The physician, Steven J. Hatfill, has not been charged with a crime and maintains his innocence. Hatfill is suing the FBI, the Justice Department and a handful of present and former law enforcement officials. He alleges that the leaks were illegal, damaged his reputation and violated his right to privacy.

"We have identified three of the leakers who were previously anonymous," one of Hatfill's attorneys, Mark A. Grannis, said near the outset of a sparsely attended hearing in federal court. "Some of the most damaging information leaked in this case [came] straight out of the U.S. attorney's office."

The anthrax mailings killed five people and sickened about 20 others from Florida to Connecticut. Coming on the heels of the suicide attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City and on the Pentagon, the mailings led to the shutdown of a Senate office building and heightened the nation's fear of prolonged terrorism.

Hatfill's attorneys alleged that the three officials who leaked investigative details to the media were: Roscoe C. Howard Jr., who from 2001 to 2004 served as U.S. attorney for the District of Columbia; Daniel S. Seikaly, who served as Howard's criminal division chief; and Edwin Cogswell, who formerly served as a spokesman for the FBI.

This is where this suit will get interesting. Many of the stories that Hatfill named in his suit complained about the revelation of facts pertaining to ongoing FBI searches: news that dogs searching for anthrax had responded to locations on Hatfill's property.

The agents quietly brought the dogs to various locations frequented by a dozen people they considered possible suspects – hoping the hounds would match the scent on the letters. In place after place, the dogs had no reaction. But when the handlers approached the Frederick, Md., apartment building of Dr. Steven J. Hatfill, an eccentric 48-year-old scientist who had worked in one of the Army's top bioweapons-research laboratories, the dogs immediately became agitated, NEWSWEEK has learned. "They went crazy," says one law-enforcement source. The agents also brought the bloodhounds to the Washington, D.C., apartment of Hatfill's girlfriend and to a Denny's restaurant in Louisiana, where Hatfill had eaten the day before. In both places, the dogs jumped and barked, indicating they'd picked up the scent. (Bloodhounds are the only dogs whose powers of smell are admissible in court.)

The same article even states that the government didn't have anything that it considered real proof against Hatfill.

But officials say they aren't close to making any arrests in the case. "We're still a long way from any proof that we could take into court," says one senior official.

[snip]

Officials have been particularly careful to point out that Hatfill is one of "around 12" people they are looking at. They say he is not a suspect, or even a target of the investigation.

So it's not like this article pinpointed Hatfill as the one target of the investigation—it did just the opposite.

Which is why I think things might get interesting from here. I'm not actually sure what the standard of secrecy for non-grand jury material is. But some of the stories Hatfill points to—and therefore the leaks—don't support the case that the leaks pinpointed him and therefore ruined his career. Perhaps the government will settle to make this go away, but perhaps not; perhaps the government will push this trial, which might lead to more disclosure, rather than less.