

# STING: TWO NEW REPORTS ON HOW THE FBI CREATES TERRORISTS

In the last several days, two important new reports on the FBI's creation of Muslim terrorists.

The first is an Al Jazeera English video, above, from Trevor Aaronson, who also wrote *The Terror Factory*. He interviews both informants and the men who entrapped them, the latter of whom describe the FBI's method. The video includes an extended look at a Toledo informant not previously profiled.

Today Human Rights Watch released a report (I'm part way done with it). That did both statistical analysis of the terrorism cases since 9/11 and close reviews of 27 cases across the country. They did interviews with a number of detainees. They examined the use of pre-trial solitary confinement.

Both reports make a key point: by putting informants in mosques, the FBI is effectively inserting potentially dangerous criminals inside faith communities rather than imprisoning them. The HRW report notes that in some cases, those informants "trolled" for potential leads.

Some of the cases we reviewed appear to have begun as virtual fishing expeditions, where the FBI had no basis to suspect a particular individual of a propensity to commit terrorist acts. In those cases, the informant identified a specific target by randomly initiating conversations near a mosque. Assigned to raise controversial religious and political topics, these informants probed their targets'

opinions on politically sensitive and nuanced subjects, sometimes making comments that appeared designed to inflame the targets. If a target's opinions were deemed sufficiently troubling, officials concerned with nascent radicalization pushed the sting operation forward.

HRW's primary recommendation is more controls on the use of informants. In particular it describes how FBI sometimes uses an effort for spiritual advice to push a (usually young) target towards violence.

Both reports provide valuable new details on how the FBI makes terrorists. We're getting closer to mapping how all these systems fit together.