

Original FOIA Number: 2003-0260-F

6th FOIA Number:

2nd FOIA Number:

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WHORM Category Code: HU013-20
WHORM Category Name: Asian-American Groups

Document Number: 208744
Alpha File Name:

THE WHITE HOUSE
CORRESPONDENCE TRACKING WORKSHEET

HU 013-20

INCOMING

DATE RECEIVED: JANUARY 30, 1991

NAME OF CORRESPONDENT: MR. ROBERT A. CLARK

SUBJECT: APPRECIATION FOR THE PRESIDENT'S REMARKS
REGARDING ANTI-ARAB SENTIMENT IN AMERICA;
EXPRESSES CONCERN ABOUT THE ACTIONS OF THE
FBI AND INS AGAINST ARAB-AMERICANS

ROUTE TO: OFFICE/AGENCY	(STAFF NAME)	ACTION	DATE	TYPE	C COMPLETED
		ACT CODE	YY/MM/DD	RESP	D YY/MM/DD
LISA BATTAGLIA		ORG	91/01/30		C 91/04/02
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COMMENTS: INCOMING IS DATED JAN 25 "90" BUT IS
POSTMARKED JAN 25 91
ENCLOSES ARE COPIES OF ARTICLES/EDITORIALS
BY THE WRITER

ADDITIONAL CORRESPONDENTS: MEDIA:L INDIVIDUAL CODES: 4670 4400

MI MAIL USER CODES: (A) (B) (C)

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*ACTION CODES:          *DISPOSITION          *OUTGOING          *
*                      *                      *CORRESPONDENCE:  *
*A-APPROPRIATE ACTION  *A-ANSWERED          *TYPE RESP=INITIALS *
*C-COMMENT/RECOM       *B-NON-SPEC-REFERRAL  *          OF SIGNER *
*D-DRAFT RESPONSE      *C-COMPLETED          *          CODE = A   *
*F-FURNISH FACT SHEET  *S-SUSPENDED          *COMPLETED = DATE OF *
*I-INFO COPY/NO ACT NEC*                      *          OUTGOING  *
*R-DIRECT REPLY W/COPY *                      *                      *
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*X-INTERIM REPLY       *                      *                      *
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208744

The American Council Political Action Committee

January 25, 1990

husa Battaglia
The Hon. George Bush
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write to thank you for your recent remark regarding anti-Arab sentiment in America. We are also very concerned about a series of controversial actions carried out by the U.S. Department of Justice (Justice), the FBI, and the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). These actions have created a great deal of fear for many Arab-Americans. We believe that these operations cross the boundary of individual rights thus raising serious civil and constitutional questions which threaten the rights of all Americans.

Therefore, we call on you to make the necessary inquiries to determine how a group of Americans can be selected for "interviews" based purely on its ethnicity.

The American Council strongly supports Justice, the FBI and INS in their fulfillment of their responsibilities of preventing, interdicting and stopping terrorist groups from carrying out their hideous acts. And we would like to congratulate them for doing a very good job under difficult circumstances.

At the same time, we feel that it is imperative that these government agencies conduct their activities well within the bounds of the United States Constitution.

For a number of years now, Justice, The FBI and INS have selected the Arab-American and Muslim communities, as a group, for investigation. Please, consider the following facts:

- * 1986 - The Department of Justice and Immigration (INS) developed the "Alien Terrorist and Undesirables: A Contingency Plan" targeting only Arabs and Muslims. A new jail described as being, "a good place to put about 5,000 Arabs," was established specifically for this plan. This plan must be repudiated by the highest levels of government.
- * 1987 - FBI and INS agents arrest and threaten Arab immigrants with deportation because their political views varied from the government's.
- * 1990 - anti-Arab violence and hate crimes reach an all-time high.
- * 1991 - the FBI begins mass questioning of Arab-Americans leaders.

(more)

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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Comments:

These events coupled with the explosive confrontation in the Gulf have compelled Arab-Americans believe strongly that they may face the greatest threat confronting any American group since the U.S. government jailed Japanese-Americans during World War II.

Some very serious questions have been raised as to the propriety and constitutionality of the actions. In carrying out these activities, the government has created the impression that Arab-Americans and Muslim-Americans, as a group, are suspect. Somehow, they are less loyal and not as law abiding as the rest of America.

Clearly this matter deserves your further attention and intervention. Your inquires into the issues which were not mentioned in your broadcast remarks is of great importance to our community. There are many benefits for such action your part including:

1. A clear message will be broadcast to all Americans that the President is visibly and positively active in guarding their constitutional rights. The importance of this should not be underestimated particularly to America's new citizens and newly arrived immigrants. A great many of them come from societies where democratic institutions do not exist.

2. The government agencies in questions will have an opportunity to present their case before the Chief Executive and dispel the many rumors that abound as to what the government's real intentions are.

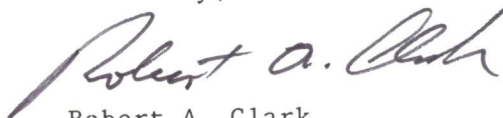
3. Fear and misunderstanding would be eliminated or significantly reduced.

4. Such a hearing would reinforce, at a very sensitive and emotional time, the position that in America there is no sanction for bigotry.

Again, we thank your for your positive remarks and we implore your prompt consideration of and action on the issues mentioned above. We look forward to hearing from you. Thank you.

With warm personal regards.

Sincerely,



Robert A. Clark
President

RAC/pm
Enclosures

TUESDAY, JANUARY 22, 1991

The Washington Post

AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The FBI and Arab Americans

In the words of Thomas Jefferson, "eternal vigilance" is the price of freedom. Yet, Charles Lichenstein and Paul Joyal seem eager to take exception when Arab Americans are vigilant in guarding their constitutional and civil liberties [op-ed, Jan. 21]. The authors seem more concerned with providing the FBI "elbow room" than they are about the rights of these Americans. Have they forgotten how much elbow room J. Edgar Hoover had?

In "interviewing" Arab-American leaders in an attempt to gather information about possible terrorist activity in the United States, the FBI is asking questions about their political beliefs [news story, Jan. 14]. Deputy Attorney General William P. Barr tells us that "these interviews are not intended to intimidate." However, that is what they do. They intimidate people into being politically silent and passive.

Although I strongly support active anti-terrorist efforts, these activities should be conducted in a way that does not violate constitutional liberties. In carrying out the interviews, the FBI and Justice Department have acted with prejudice. They are in essence saying they believe Arab Americans have information of possible terrorist acts but are unwilling to come forward and notify the authorities. Somehow, Arab-American loyalty to America is less than what it should be.

Also, the interviews help create an impression that since this group is being officially questioned on a serious matter, there must be something there. Thus, they cast a cloud over the community without a shred of evidence.

Contrary to what the government

says, Arab Americans have a lot to worry about. This is not an isolated instance. In 1986 the Immigration and Naturalization Service wrote a detailed plan called "The Alien Terrorists and Undesirables: A Contingency Plan." Under that plan, a new federal prison camp was established in Louisiana. Some government officials thought it "would be a good place to put about 5,000 Arabs." The plan has not been repudiated by the highest levels of our government.

In 1987 the FBI and INS arrested seven Palestinians in Los Angeles. Their crime was membership in the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. The evidence was primarily pro-Palestinian magazine articles. They were arrested because their political thinking was not in line with official U.S. government policy.

During World War II, Japanese Americans were interned. The government said it was doing this to guard against acts of sabotage and terrorism. It now appears that Arab Americans are singled out for special treatment.

This is a clear and present danger to all Americans, not just Arab Americans. The best way to beat this ugly and unconstitutional threat is to fight this action. Anything short of that invites America to repeat its past violations of the Constitution. Today, it is Arab Americans. Not too long ago it was Japanese Americans. Who will it be tomorrow?

ROBERT A. CLARK

Arlington

The writer is president of The American Council, a political action committee working to improve U.S.-Arab relations.

The FBI should stop its "interviews" of Arab Americans about potential terrorism in this country. Such interviews are not only intimidating, but they make all Arab Americans unfairly suspect in the eyes of their fellow citizens.

If the FBI has credible information about terrorist activity, by all means it should take every action to thwart it. But to question Arab Americans at random is highly offensive to all Americans. Would it be appropriate for the FBI to question me about the Irish Republican Army just because of my name? Would it be fair to question Italian Americans about the Mafia just because of their ancestry?

The analogy has been made to what was suffered by loyal Japanese Americans during World War II. It is apt. Many of us thought that Americans had learned from that tragic mistake. It is obvious that the Justice Department and FBI have not.

KEVIN DELANY

Washington

The Washington Post

AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER

Singling Out Arab Americans

THE GULF crisis has raised the threat of terrorism—instigated by Saddam Hussein and directed against American targets both abroad and in this country. Hence, the increased security at federal buildings and airports, and the decision of the Immigration and Naturalization Service to photograph and fingerprint visitors holding Iraqi and Kuwaiti passports. These have been telling signs of a nation assuming a wartime footing. Given the pronouncements out of Baghdad, these countermeasures are inconvenient but necessary security precautions against possible terrorist attacks.

Yet it is exactly at times such as these that government must take care not to circumscribe the rights and freedoms of its citizens. Regrettably, that may have happened last week during the course of a special Federal Bureau of Investigation program focused on Arab Americans.

FBI agents contacted more than 200 Arab-American business and community leaders across the country, ostensibly to inform them of the bureau's intention to protect them against any backlash from the Persian Gulf crisis. Investigating and prosecuting hate crimes and ethnically motivated violence spawned by Middle East turbulence is a legitimate job of federal law enforcement officials, so that aspect of the bureau's initiative was welcomed by Arab Americans. But FBI agents also used the occasion to gather intelligence about possible terrorist threats. This is where the FBI quickly wore out its welcome.

Organizations representing Arab Americans contend that agents asked citizens about their political beliefs, their attitudes toward the Persian Gulf crisis, Saddam Hussein and their knowledge or suspicions about possible terrorism. Deputy Attorney General William P. Barr denies any FBI intention to intimidate Arab Americans, as some community leaders fear. "At the same time," he says, "in the light of the terrorist threats . . . it is only prudent to solicit informa-

tion about potential terrorist activity and to request the future assistance of these individuals."

But why does the government presume that Americans of Arab descent should know about "potential terrorist activity" or that this group of Americans is any more knowledgeable about such activity than any other? FBI spokesman Thomas F. Jones says it's because the bureau is aware of a number of terrorist organizations in the United States that "consist of people of Middle East descent" and that the "possibility exists that [terrorists] are living in Arab-American communities." In that way, he said, Arab Americans "could come into possession of information on potential terrorist acts."

It is a perilously flimsy rationale. It leaves the U.S. government wide open to the accusation that it is dividing Americans by ethnic background and singling out one group as a suspect class. If that were true, the government's conduct would clearly be constitutionally offensive and morally repugnant. To imply that Arab Americans—some of whom are members of families that have been in this country since the turn of the century—may have a special link to terrorists is both insidious and harmful. The government cannot go around making judgments and presumptions about citizens on the basis of their descent.

Like all Americans, Arab Americans have the right to be accepted and treated as *individuals*, and the government has a constitutional duty to observe and protect that right. Neither should the government invade the privacy or trample the dignity of one class of citizens. What is being seen now recalls the negative stereotyping that served as a basis for the shameful treatment of Americans of Japanese ancestry during World War II. Such stereotyping, with all its ugly and unfair implications, should not be allowed to take hold.

FBI Starts Interviewing Arab-American Leaders

Watch Ordered on Iraqi Embassy, Mission

By Sharon LaFraniere
Washington Post Staff Writer

The FBI began seeking interviews this week with more than 200 Arab-American business and community leaders in an attempt to gather information about possible terrorist activity in the United States, a measure that was described as precautionary and drew protests from Arab-American organizations.

The FBI and the Justice Department said the nationwide interviews have a twofold purpose: to spread word that the FBI wants to protect Arab Americans from any backlash associated with attempts to induce Iraq to leave Kuwait and to gather intelligence about potential terrorist threats.

Law enforcement officials said FBI agents are asking Arab Americans to watch for possible threats and report anything suspicious but are not assuming they are aware of or involved in criminal activity.

Intelligence reports have noted recent "casing" of U.S. facilities and other potential targets overseas by pro-Iraqi terrorist groups, raising concern about terrorist attacks. Officials consider such attacks more likely to occur abroad.

"These interviews are not intended to intimidate," said Deputy Attorney General William P. Barr. "The interviews are an opportunity to keep an open channel of communication with people who may be victimized if hostilities occur. At the

same time, in the light of the terrorist threats . . . it is only prudent to solicit information about potential terrorist activity and to request the future assistance of these individuals."

The FBI has ordered a close watch on the Iraqi Embassy here, the Iraqi mission to the United Nations, Iraqi commercial interests, students and groups with suspected ties to terrorist organizations.

Responding to the interviewing effort, congressional committees overseeing the FBI noted the agency is treading sensitive ground and urged caution. "We'll be asking the FBI about this and trying to assure ourselves that they are not in fact engaged in something they should not be doing," said James Currie, a spokesman for the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. "We just want to make sure that they are not heavy-handed about this."

The FBI is expected to provide information to the House and Senate intelligence committees this week about its response to the Persian Gulf crisis.

Rep. Don Edwards (D-Calif.), chairman of the Judiciary subcommittee on civil and constitutional rights, said in a statement: "We support that FBI's anti-terrorism efforts, and we want them to be vigilant, but they must be careful to avoid overreaction. Inherent in the current crisis is the very real danger of damage to civil liberties."

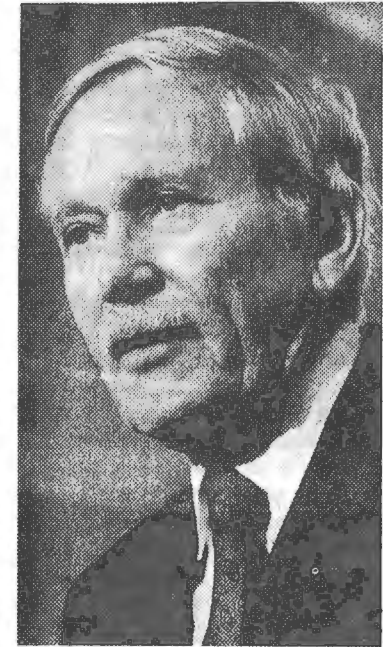


REP. NICK J. RAHALL II
... disturbed by FBI interviews

The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, the nation's largest Arab organization, said about a dozen people have called to express confusion and feelings of intimidation after calls from FBI agents. "This is shades of the Japanese-American experience of World War II," said Albert Mokhiber, president of the organization. "We find it to be quite offensive. It is, in effect, being dubbed a suspect class."

Nazih Baydia, the organization's regional director interviewed by the FBI Monday, said he objected most strongly to "political questions . . . They asked if the Palestine community is supportive of [Iraqi President] Saddam Hussein, if the Iraqi community thinks the invasion of Kuwait is right." Baydia is of Lebanese descent.

"It's not acceptable," said James Zogby, director of The Arab Amer-



REP. DON EDWARDS
... bureau must "avoid overreaction"

ican Institute, another national group. "When the long arm of government reaches into your living room, it creates a political chill and silences political debate."

Rep. Nick J. Rahall II (D-W.Va.), whose grandparents were born in Lebanon, said that, "if there is the slightest scintilla of evidence" that someone "has knowledge about terrorism, sure they should be interrogated." But "just to take an ethnic group and start asking questions disturbs me," he added. "The FBI has fallen victim to and is only nurturing the absolutely ludicrous perception that only Arabs and all Arabs are terrorists."

The Justice Department also is studying a proposal to ask the 8,500 Iraqis estimated to be living in the United States to re-register with immigration authorities. But one official said the department is far more likely to support heightened surveillance at U.S. entry points.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 11, 1991 ...B

THE WASHINGTON POST

Middle-Eastern Enclave Fears Reprisals in U.S.

FBI Probe of Arab Americans Fuels Panic

By Lauren Ina
Special to The Washington Post

DEARBORN, Mich., Jan. 10—As the Persian Gulf crisis worsens, people here in North America's largest community of Arab Americans have reacted with panic and widespread concern, as many put it, about "not wanting to end up like Alex Odeh."

Odeh, 45, was a Palestinian activist killed when a pipe bomb exploded as he opened his office door in Santa Ana, Calif., two days after the Achille Lauro hijacking incident in 1985. His killer has not been found, and his death still reverberates in the Arab community as a frightening example of what can happen when anti-Arab hostility increases as a direct result of Mideast events.

Arab Americans here said the unsuccessful talks between Secretary of State James A. Baker III and Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz Wednesday are a sign that war is imminent. They said their community must mobilize if members become targets of hostility.

"The potential for backlash is worse than any other Middle Eastern conflict we've had, including the Iranian hostage crisis of the late 1970s," said Joseph Borrajo of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC). "This is a very dangerous time for us."

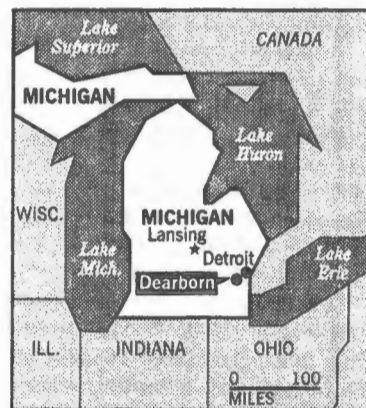
Ali Harb, 26, a Lebanese American who owns a Middle East import store in this suburb of Detroit, said, "You can always feel the tension here when there are problems in the Middle East. If the Dearborn police pull you over, you know you're going to get a ticket. If you take the Detroit tunnel to Canada, you know you're going to be pulled over by customs and detained."

Harb's store is one of many Arab-owned businesses lining Warren Avenue, where storefronts bear names in Arabic and English.

The Arab community traces its roots to immigrants who flocked here for auto-industry jobs at the turn of the century. The community is highly integrated, with various Arab sects. Imams, or Moslem spiritual leaders, are heard calling people to prayer five times a day over a loudspeaker in densely populated areas of Dearborn.

More than half of the 250,000 Arab Americans here are Lebanese, and the community also is composed of Yemenis, Egyptians, Palestinians, Syrians, Iraqis and Chaldeans, or Christian Iraqis.

At a special meeting in Detroit Wednesday night to discuss how the Gulf crisis is affecting these people, ADC officials heard complaints about recent FBI questioning of Arab Americans and warned that all Arabs



in the community are vulnerable to hostility.

"We need real protection from hostilities right now," said a Detroit lawyer of Lebanese descent. "If the FBI wants to help out, maybe they should come to work with us to open the door first and see if it blows up."

Noel Saleh, 43, a Lebanese American who runs an Arab human-services organization in Dearborn told the group that "all of us, whatever our national origin may be, are going to be affected both as Arabs and as Americans."

The potential for hostility compounds anguish among Iraqis about possible war because many have relatives in Iraq and because Iraqis in the U.S. military may have to fight against their homeland.

"This is such a time of sorrow," said Sam Yono, 40, an Iraqi American who owns a grocery store in Detroit. "I am going through a very hard time trying to deal with this and praying that a peaceful solution can come before Jan. 15."

Yono and other Iraqi Americans

step carefully around Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's justification for invading Kuwait last August.

"It's hard 'because, as a boy, I learned in school that, at one time, Iraq was the mother country and Kuwait was a part of it," said Yono, who has lived in the United States for 23 years. "But I am also an American citizen and . . . affected by what happens to this government."

Assimilation and their U.S. citizenship have made most Arabs backers of the U.S. denunciation of Iraqi aggression, but they are against waging war and would like to see Arabs devise a peaceful solution with no bloodshed, said Jessica Daher, an ADC regional coordinator.

The community is scrambling to mount a campaign against stereotyping Arabs in an effort to stress that its members are Americans who want peace. Borrajo, for instance, conducts teach-ins at area high schools to test American students' knowledge of Arabs. "The most frequently used word to define Palestinians is 'terrorists,'" he said.

Gary Baydoun, a Lebanese American who owns a real-estate company, said he is urging the community "to participate in every good, honest peace movement between now and Jan. 15, and then, God forbid, if and when a war should break out."

Residents also are preparing to receive perhaps scores of war-ravaged immigrants who may come here to what has been termed "the Ellis Island of the Midwest."

"I have seen waves of [then], and they are all human tragedies," Saleh said. "There is a deep concern that we're going to have another wave of war refugees coming here, and I don't look forward to that day."

**ARAB
AMERICAN
REACTION**

FBI plan to interview Arab Americans smacks of WWII internment

By Robert Clark

Special to The Arab American News

ARLINGTON - The FBI is now "interviewing" over 200 Arab American leaders in an attempt to gather information about possible terrorist activity in the United States. The Deputy U.S. Attorney General, William P. Barr, tells us that "These interviews are not intended to intimidate." However, that is precisely what they do. They intimidate people into being politically silent and passive.

VIEWPOINT

Although I strongly support the need to have an active anti-terrorist effort, these activities should be conducted in a way that does not violate our civil liberties as guaranteed by our Constitution. In carrying out the interviews, the FBI and the Justice Department have acted with prejudice.

FBI harassment...

The FBI and Justice are in essence saying they believe Arab

Americans have information of possible terrorist acts but are unwilling to come forward and notify the authorities. Somehow, their loyalty to America is less than what it should be.

Also, the interviews broadcast the message that since this group is being officially questioned on a very serious matter, there must be something there. Thus, they cast a cloud over the entire community without a shred of evidence.

Contrary to what the government says, Arab Americans have a lot to worry about. This is not an isolated instance. In 1986, the Justice Department's Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), wrote a detailed 31 page plan called, "The Alien Terrorists and Undesirables: A Contingency Plan."

Under that plan, a new federal prison camp was established near Oakdale, Louisiana. Some government officials thought it "would be a good place to put about 5,000 Arabs." When the secret plan became public, the INS tried to discount the issue stating the plan had not been endorsed or accepted. Yet to this date, the plan has not been repudiated by the highest levels of our government.

In 1987, the FBI and INS arrested seven Palestinians in Los Angeles. Their crime was membership in the Popular Front

for the Liberation of Palestine. The evidence was primarily pro-Palestinian magazines and articles. They were arrested because they were Arabs and their political thinking was not in line with official U.S. government policy.

During World War Two, Japanese-Americans were held as "special guests" of our good government. The government said it was doing this to guard against acts of sabotage and terrorism. It now appears that Arab Americans have been singled out for special treatment by our government.

This is a clear and present danger to all Americans, not just Arab Americans. The best way to beat this ugly and unconstitutional threat is to yell FOUL and fight

this action every inch of the way. Anything short of that invites America to repeat its past violations of the Constitution.

Today, it is Arab Americans. Not too long ago, it was Japanese-Americans. Who will it be tomorrow?

(Mr. Clark is President of the American Council PAC, a political action committee working to improve U.S.-Arab relations).

Inquiries on Arab-Americans By the F.B.I. Raise Concern

By LISA BELKIN

An agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation arrived at Nazih Deyda's office in Los Angeles last week, unannounced, unexpected and accompanied by a member of the Los Angeles Police Department's anti-terrorist squad.

At first the visitors asked Mr. Deyda if, as the regional director of the Arab-American Anti-Discrimination Committee, he had been subjected to harassment or threats because of the standoff in the Persian Gulf. Mr. Deyda was pleased with the questions and the simultaneous offer of protection.

Then the conversation took a different turn. The officers, Mr. Deyda said, began asking about his political beliefs, his views of Israel and of President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. "They asked me did I know any terrorists," he said. "I object to this kind of questioning."

Mr. Deyda's mixed emotions reflect the feelings of many of the nearly three million Arab-Americans this week. It has been five days since the F.B.I. confirmed that it had ordered its agents to interview business and community leaders of Arab descent in the United States. The interviews were described by the bureau as an effort to get information about possible hate crimes or terrorist acts. Since Monday, more than 200 interviews have been conducted, all with American citizens, the bureau has said.

[The increased concern that Washington is displaying over the possibility of terrorism was evident yesterday in a Bush Administration warning that attacks are being planned by Iraqi-supported terrorists. It said agencies were taking countermeasures in the United States and abroad. Page 9.]

"We have a schizophrenic relationship with the F.B.I.," said Albert Mokhibar, the national president of Mr. Deyda's organization, which has 25,000 members and is the largest Arab-American group in the United States. "On the one hand, we go to them to protect our civil rights. On the other hand, we find them more often than not prob-

ing into our personal opinions and violating our rights."

The Arab-American Anti-Discrimination Committee is one of more than a dozen civil rights groups that attended a meeting in Washington yesterday to form a coalition to address the question of F.B.I. harassment.

According to several people who attended the meeting, fear was expressed not only over the F.B.I. interviews, but also over an announcement by the Justice Department on Thursday that immigration officials will begin photographing and fingerprinting anyone entering the United States with an Iraqi or Kuwaiti passport.

"It's all consistent with a presumption that your national origin means you have some knowledge of, or connection with, terrorist activities," said Kate Martin, director of the National Security Litigation Project of the American Civil Liberties Union, who attended the meeting.

Other groups in the new coalition include the Japanese-American Citizens League and the Washington Area Jews for Palestinian Peace. The group has prepared a statement to be presented to William Baker, head of the F.B.I.'s criminal division, at a meeting Monday.

Praise and Protest

A draft of the statement, which is expected to be completed over the weekend, reflects the balancing act that Mr. Mokhibar described, according to several people familiar with the document. First, it applauds the bureau for its investigation of hate crimes, and then it protests the interviews, calling them harassment of Arab-Americans.

The possibility that Arab-Americans might one day be interned in camps similar to those that held Japanese-Americans in World War II was much discussed at yesterday's meeting, coalition members said.

"This certainly raises that specter," Ms. Martin said. "One of the questions that we don't know the answers to is, where did they get the list of people they are interviewing? Did they already have a list of people to be talked to in the event of war with Iraq? That's the first thing you need to repeat the World War II experience. That also began with interviews, and then it accelerated."

The current tension is a reflection of

THE NEW YORK TIMES, SATURDAY, JANUARY 12, 1991

years of mutual mistrust of the bureau by Arab-Americans, leaders say.

"The F.B.I. has long considered political support of the P.L.O. position in the Middle East to be the equivalent of terrorist activities, and thinks that gives them the right to treat people who hold those views as terrorists," Ms. Martin said.

Munir Bayoud, a former member of the League of Arab States office in Dallas, and his wife, Katie, who is the president of the North Texas chapter of the Anti-Discrimination Committee, recalled Mr. Bayoud's encounter with the bureau in 1972, immediately after Palestinian terrorists killed 11 Israeli athletes at the Olympic Games in Mu-

Does national origin imply a connection with terrorism?

nich. Mr. Bayoud said he felt so threatened by that interview that he sought the advice of a lawyer.

Mr. Mokhibar cited the 1987 disclosure that the bureau and the Immigration and Naturalization Service had drawn up a contingency plan to quarantine Arab-Americans at a camp in Oakdale, La., in the event of war with certain Arab states. The plan came to light when the immigration agency tried to deport eight Palestinians and a Kenyan citizen because of their political views.

Despite the fears, Mr. Mokhibar said, many Arab-Americans have tempered their public anger at the F.B.I. because they are aware that they might need the bureau to protect them against a possible surge in hate crimes. Next week, he said, his group plans to release a report showing a dramatic increase in such crimes since Iraq invaded Kuwait on Aug. 2. From January to August, he said, his group recorded five violent acts against Arab-Americans that they considered to have purely racist roots. From August through December they recorded 37.

"It puts us in a very awkward and dangerous position," he said. "We need their protection, and should we criti-

cize perhaps they won't offer that protection as readily."

Sharon Smith, a spokeswoman for the F.B.I., said the bureau was not trying to intimidate Arab-American leaders by interviewing them.

"We have two mandates," she said. "One is to protect these people from any ignorant individuals who might try to injure them if hostilities with Iraq should break out. But we also have a mandate to deter terrorism."

The Arab-American leaders being interviewed, Ms. Smith said, might be in a position to provide information about potential terrorism; therefore, the bureau has an obligation to interview them.

She said none of those being interviewed were suspected of terrorist activity. She also said the interviews were "not a first step" toward eventual internment of Arab-Americans. "That is in no way, shape or form the purpose of these interviews," she asserted.

Polite but Intimidating

Ms. Smith said the agents conducting the interviews had been ordered to be "civil and cordial."

Eight people interviewed by a reporter, all of whom met with F.B.I. agents this week, agreed that the agents were polite. Indeed, Mr. and Mrs. Bayoud said they were so struck by the difference between this meeting and the hostile one Mr. Bayoud endured in 1972 that they invited the agent to stay for a cup of Arabic coffee.

But the fact that the agents are polite does not mean they are not intimidating, civil rights advocates say.

"They're the police," said Jinsoo Kim, a member of the Movement Support Network, an arm of the Center for Constitutional Rights that documents government surveillance of individuals. "You have the right not to talk to them, but everyone thinks, 'If I don't talk to them maybe they'll think I'll have something to hide.'"

David Najjab, a Dallas photographer who was interviewed by the F.B.I. on Monday, said, "As soon as people know that you've been contacted they think you've done something wrong."

Although the agent was friendly, Mr. Najjab said, the experience was still "frightening and insulting." He said he insisted on meeting the agent, whose business card identified him as George Green, in a public place, so the interview took place over steak and eggs at a nearby Denny's restaurant.



Mark Perlestein for The New York Times

Munir Bayoud, right, former member of the League of Arab States office in Dallas, felt threatened after being interviewed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation in 1972 after the terrorist slaying of 11 Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics. He is seen with his wife, Katie.

Mr. Najjab said his first question to Mr. Green was, "How did you get my name?" but the agent never answered. Mr. Najjab is co-chairman of the Arab-American Institute, which encourages voter registration, and he believes the bureau found his name when he was quoted in a Dallas newspaper article shortly after Iraq invaded Kuwait.

A Question Bring Laughter

After that, he said, Mr. Green did most of the talking. As with Mr. Deyda, the agent talked first about violence against Arab-Americans and asked if Mr. Najjab knew of any recent incidents of such violence.

Then, Mr. Najjab said, the agent raised the subject of terrorism. "He looked at me and said, 'Do you know of

anyone who wants to blow up a Federal building?' " Mr. Najjab said.

In response to the question, he and his wife, Mary, "started laughing," he said. "We told him, 'You watch too much TV,'" he remembers saying. "Then we told him, 'We don't know people like that.' I think he was kind of offended that we laughed."

Mr. Najjab said he, in turn, was offended by the question. "I'm an American citizen," he said. "If I knew someone was about to blow up a building, don't they think I would report it on my own?"

"We're not the 'flavor of the month' community so they can get away with this with us," he added. "They think we need them too much to complain."