

## **Released files show police spy activities**

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The city of Denver released more than 200 documents and recorded depositions from the Police Department's "spy files" on Friday.

The files included the results of an internal-affairs investigation that revealed how the head of the department's intelligence bureau misled Chief Gerry Whitman and city administrators into believing officers were in compliance with federal guidelines when gathering information on protesters.

The city released the documents to The Denver Post and 9News in compliance with Denver District Judge Catherine Lemon's ruling in December to make public files relating to more than a decade of police surveillance of various activist groups.

Among members of the groups were Stephen and Vickie Nash of CopWatch, and various others, including American Indian activist Russell Means and University of Colorado professor Ward Churchill.

In the case of the Nashes, the city earlier had acknowledged that officers in the department's intelligence bureau improperly spied on the couple, whom officers labeled as "criminal extremists." CopWatch monitors Denver officers and their behavior.

The city fought the court's decision but did not appeal the December ruling, which means the Police Department will no longer be able to issue blanket denials on open-records requests for police internal-affairs files.

Whitman was unavailable for comment Friday, a spokesman said. The American Civil Liberties Union's legal director, Mark Silverstein, said he needed the weekend to look over all the documents provided to him by 9News before commenting.

The documents accuse a retired police captain of misleading the police chief and then- Mayor Wellington Webb about whether the department's surveillance practices complied with federal guidelines.

The documents accuse Capt. Vincent DiManna of negligence in his performance as commander of the department's intelligence bureau, and claim he presented Whitman with a bogus policy. Webb later relayed that policy to the public at a news conference.

"These actions embarrassed the Denver Police Department and the city administration," said Marco Vasquez, head of internal affairs, in an interdepartment correspondence dated July 7, 2003.

DiManna, who could not be reached for comment late Friday, is retired and was not disciplined as a result of the investigation.

The department announced in 2002 that it kept files on more than 200 groups and more than 3,200 individuals. Webb had acknowledged the department was improperly keeping files on peaceful protesters.

Among the files released Friday was an outline of high-ranking officers who have headed up the intelligence bureau and a breakdown of the department's surveillance tactics, which included gaining membership to activist groups under false pretenses, and dispatching undercover officers to gatherings from southern Colorado to Wyoming to dig up information on members.

In the early 1990s, an undercover officer spied on a meeting at the Mexican Consulate in Denver with protesters sympathetic to rebels in Chiapas, Mexico, according to the files.

In 1994, a bureau detective uncovered a plot to assassinate an AIM member and Churchill, but the files show no action being taken by the department or warning given to the men, the documents show. The detective told internal affairs he believed the FBI would handle the threat, but was not aware of any follow-up.

Detectives traveled to Greeley to spy on members of the Colorado Progressive Coalition, which promotes racial justice and civil rights, and they surveilled protests of police accountability and rallies against the National Rifle Association in downtown Denver.

Detectives also spied on a gathering of Well of Life International, an organization that protests the Kurdish plight in Turkey; the American Constitutional Party; and Amnesty International for a rally protesting the harvesting of internal organs from executed Chinese prisoners. They also spied on a funeral service in Laramie for the wife of the Rev. Pete Peters, an outspoken critic of the United Nations, where they collected license plate numbers.

The documents show that in the summer of 2000, Whitman issued a directive to research the intelligence-gathering practices of other cities. In response, a police detective noted in an internal memo that "several large police agencies do not use undercover intelligence officers at events."

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