



## Homeland Security extensively monitored Occupy movement, documents reveal

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Newly released documents made public for the first time this week reveal how the United States Department of Homeland Security coordinated with local law enforcement across the US to monitor the Occupy Wall Street movement.

The New York Times in conjunction with the Partnership for Civil Justice Fund say the DHS has provided them with 4,000 page of government documents pertaining to how the US agency relied on nationally dispersed “fusion centers” to share and disseminate intelligence about the Occupy movement in late 2011 after it launched in Lower Manhattan that November.

Rather than demonstrating any blatantly egregious and certainly illegal surveillance tactics employed against protesters, however, the documents instead show how DHS-fusion centers from Florida to Massachusetts monitored their local OWS chapters using publically available social media postings and other open source investigation.

*“In many cases, law enforcement officials appeared to simply assemble or copy lists of protests or related activities, sometimes maintaining tallies of how many people might show up,”* Colin Moynihan [wrote](#) for the Times on Friday. *“They also noted appearances by prominent Occupy supporters and advised other officials about what — or whom — to watch for, according to the newly disclosed documents.”*

Indeed, fusion center employees shared with colleagues across the country as much information as possible about rallies, marches and other gatherings arranged at OWS encampments as more sprang up across the US following the start of an occupation in New York City’s Zuccotti Park in November 2011.

The Times have published just 77-pages—a mere sampling of the 4,000 pages of documents they say they received through Freedom of Information Act requests, but the files nevertheless showcase how federal officials alerted one another on a regular basis upon the happenings at certain encampments.

In Boston, for example, the Boston Regional Intelligence Center took notes of open forums with Prof. Noam Chomsky, where they expected members of Occupy Boston to show up en masse. In a separate bulletin circulated by the BRIC only three days later, the analyst who compiled the information provided details about guests and lecturers who were scheduled to appear, including tidbits pertaining to arrests and demonstrations linked to their past engagements.

In another document, agents at the Washington Regional Threat and Analysis Center spread the word to law enforcement officials in the nation's capital about plans for a “week of action” scheduled in DC. In that dispatch, the DC-based analyst wrote Capt. Paul Shelton of the MPD that none of the protesters making their way from Boston to DC are “*known to be troublemakers*,” according to a source inside New England.

And while the documents don't necessarily show any examples of phone or email surveillance, the Times noted, activists and privacy advocates are nonetheless not too happy with the report.

*“People must have the ability to speak out freely to express a dissenting view without the fear that the government will treat them as enemies of the state,”* Mara Verheyden-Hilliard of the PCJF told the Times.

*“To be clear: There's nothing inherently illegitimate about a local police department keeping tabs on large upcoming public gatherings—including protests—for prosaic reasons of public safety and traffic management,”* Julian Sanchez of the DC-based [Cato Institute](#) think-tank wrote in response to seeing the new documents, *“What's absurd is that the federal government is throwing 'homeland security' funds at institutions that, having proven hilariously incapable of making any contribution to counterterror efforts, instead busy themselves trawling Google for information about political rallies.”*

As RT reported previously, a congressional investigation into fusion centers in 2013 found that the DHS-led intel hubs were gathering little more than “*crap intelligence*,” and rarely led investigators to instances of potential terrorist activity—despite them being designed to do as much.

In a statement on the PCJF website, Verheyden-Hilliard equated the evidence obtained from the DHS as demonstrating the use of an “*enormous spying and monitoring apparatus*” coordinated between Department of Defense, Federal Bureau of Investigation, DHS and local police across the country, as well as with the assistance of private contractors looking out for the interests of commercial businesses.

Now, Verheyden-Hilliard writes, evidence shows exactly how those centers conducted those operations.

*“There is now, with the release of these documents, incontrovertible evidence of systematic and not incidental conduct and practices of the Fusion Centers and their personnel to direct their sights against a peaceful movement that advocated social and economic justice in the United States,” Verheyden-Hilliard wrote. “It bears noting also that while these 4,000 pages offer the most significant and largest window into the US intelligence and law enforcements’ coordinated targeting of Occupy, they can only be a portion of what is likely many more tens of thousands of pages of materials generated by the nationwide operation.”*

*“These documents show that the Fusion Centers constitute a menace to democracy,” she added. “This gross misuse of US taxpayers’ money also demonstrates that the Fusion Centers are a colossal rat hole of waste. The Fusion Centers should be defunded and ended immediately.”*