



U.S. Department of Justice

Federal Bureau of Prisons

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Rep. Sue Myrick

Washington, DC 20534

June 25, 2008

Honorable Sue Myrick  
Member, U.S. House of Representatives  
Ninth District, North Carolina  
230 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Attention: E.J. Kimball

Dear Congresswoman Myrick:

Your letter to Harley Lappin, Director, Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP), has been referred to me for response. In the letter you express deep concern about the radicalization of inmates reportedly occurring in the United States prison system. In particular, you express concern about the employment of Islamic chaplains and their respective religious endorsing organizations which may have ties to terrorism. You would like to know what steps the BOP has taken to ensure that the chaplaincy corps has not been infiltrated by people seeking to do our country harm.

In March 2003, the Department of Justice, Office of the Inspector General (OIG), opened an investigation of the BOP's policies and procedures for the selection of individuals who provide Islamic religious services to federal inmates. The results of this review were issued in an April 2004 report entitled: "A Review of the Bureau of Prisons' Selection of Muslim Religious Services Providers." The OIG investigation was broad in scope as it evaluated religious service providers (i.e., chaplains, contractors and volunteers), religious organizations, religious programs and chapel libraries. The majority of recommendations made in the OIG report have been incorporated into BOP policy, protocol and standard operating procedures. These include:

- Screening religious providers doctrinal beliefs in written and interview responses for security concerns related to advocacy of violence, support of terrorism, anti-U.S. activities, and discrimination based on race or religion;

- Employment interview teams having a panel member of the applicant's religious tradition to both screen and protect BOP security and discrimination concerns;
- Application material for chaplains, contractors and volunteer religious service providers soliciting additional information on foreign travel, reception of funds from foreign governments, membership in professional, civic and religious organizations;
- Religious endorsing and community organizations being vetted with local, state and federal government entities;
- Religious programs using un-badged community volunteers and contractors receiving constant staff supervision;
- Inmate-led religious programs receiving constant staff supervision;
- Integrally involving BOP Muslim Chaplains in agency efforts to identify and recruit appropriate chaplains, contractors and volunteers; and
- Adding a BOP recruitment, chapel resource and cultural coordinator position for oversight of the agency's religious provider recruitment plan; chapel library management, and cultural training.

The BOP has employed chaplains of the Islamic religion since the mid-1980s. As with all Bureau employees, these government workers have received the appropriate background screening clearance. Today, the BOP employs fourteen (14) Muslim chaplains. Their average tenure with the agency is eleven (11) years. None of the chaplains have been connected with the organization established by Abdurahman Alamoudi which was referenced in your letter. These chaplains have made significant contributions to facilitate the constitutional religious rights of inmates to help ensure a safe and secure environment.

I trust this provides you with sufficient information to address your concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joyce K. Conley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Joyce K. Conley  
Assistant Director