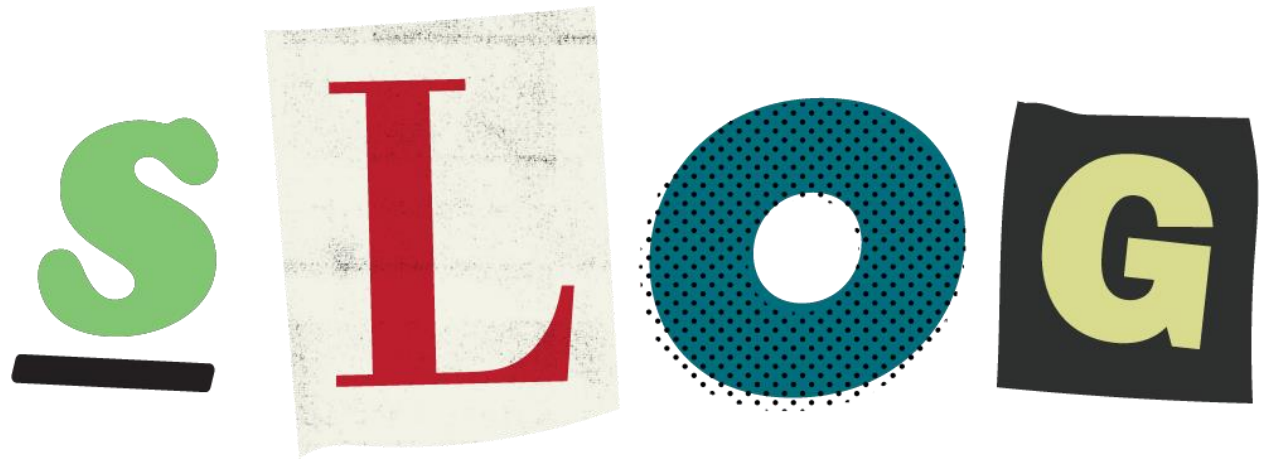




New Evidence That the US Army Hired Spies to Go Undercover Among Local Anti-War Protesters

by [Brendan Kiley](#) • Aug 20, 2013 at 3:39 pm

For the past couple of years, anti-war protesters from Olympia and Tacoma have been fighting a legal battle with the US Army, alleging in a lawsuit that a civilian named John Towery had been working as an undercover agent for the military to spy on them for political—*not* criminal, simply political—reasons.

Here are [a few refresher paragraphs from the NYT](#) about Towery and the lawsuit:

Several activists from Washington State can continue with a lawsuit accusing two civilian employees of the United States Army of spying on organizers of protests against the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, a federal appeals court ruled on Monday.

The ruling, from the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, in San Francisco, appears to clear the way for a trial involving assertions that **the Army was involved in the surveillance of civilian groups, which several statutes forbid.**

The activists filed the lawsuit in 2010 saying that John J. Towery, who worked as a criminal intelligence analyst for the force protection division at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, near Tacoma, Wash., infiltrated protest groups using the alias John Jacob. Mr. Towery then **provided information on the groups to the Army, law enforcement**

agencies and private security firms in an effort to thwart protests and target the protesters, the lawsuit said.

You can read [the original complaint filed in court over here](#).

While sifting through a mountain of information they'd received from a discovery request, attorneys representing the activists recently found hard evidence that the Army was paying Towery not just to spy on peace protesters, but paid him overtime to sit in on meetings about protest plans for the 2008 Democratic and Republican National Conventions—which had nothing to do with Fort Lewis and nothing to do with the Army, and which raise some serious questions about why **military dollars are being spent to surveil and disrupt legal, peaceful, and Constitutionally protected protest activities.**

"This finding is extremely significant," Larry Hildes, lead attorney in the case, said this afternoon. "Earlier, the Army came up with a fiction that Towery was working for the Pierce County Sheriff's Office on his own time as a volunteer, which was incredible to begin with. Then they said Rudd [Thomas Rudd, another civilian working in the military intelligence program] knew about it but wasn't telling them."

But [email trails](#), as well as a ["certificate of achievement" signed by a Lt. General](#), indicate that the Army knew that Towery was working for them as a spy.

"There is clearly much more of a national scope to this," Hildes said. "We already know the Army has [gone after Planned Parenthood](#) ... I think we're looking at a successor to [COINTELPRO](#), on that scale, but with a military component."

Why would the US Army even be interested in small-time domestic protesters?

Hildes said he believes the Army was actively trying to disrupt a community of leftist protesters so close to one of their major military bases—that this surveillance program, conducted in concert with local law enforcement, was simply trying to keep people quiet and keep protests out of the newspapers. "They did a great job in Olympia," he said. "People fled, people got arrested so many times they gave up activism, people have fought an endless parade of criminal charges when they did not, in fact, do anything illegal."

One example was [Phil Chinn](#), arrested on false DUI charges to keep him and other leftists from attending a demonstration:

In May 2007, Phil Chinn planned to attend an anti-war demonstration in Aberdeen. Along the way, he met up with a few friends in Olympia in order to carpool to their destination. Undercover officers observed the group, and police issued an "attempt to locate" code directing officers to follow Chinn's car, identified by its license plate number and described as carrying "three identified anarchists." State Patrol officers then tailed Chinn's car for some time, and pulled him over for "erratic braking" — he had been slowing down where the speed limit drops. Police then wrongfully arrested Chinn on a trumped-up DUI charge, which was later dismissed after lab tests turned up negative.

Chinn never made it to the demonstration.

The Stranger has reported on similar activities in our backyard: [desperate SPD- and FBI-led attempts](#) to discredit former activists, activists in Olympia who've [done time in solitary confinement](#) for refusing to answer McCarthyesque questions about other people's political beliefs, and opponents of proposed trans-continental coal trains who've been [visited at home by the FBI](#) before any protests of any significance have even happened.

So the next time you hear President Obama say that the US government does not spy on its own citizens and that "nobody is listening" to your conversations, please remember John Towery. I'd bet my eye teeth that he is just the sloppiest, clumsiest tip of an iceberg.

And here's a question: If the US Army has denied knowledge of Towery's spying, but we now have evidence that Towery was paid (overtime!) to spy on dissidents, does that mean US Army officers are now open to charges of perjury?

"I'd be very surprised if that happened," Hildes said. "But we're going to bring it up."