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FBI

# FBI Richmond official who oversaw memo targeting Catholics testifies to Congress

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**EXCLUSIVE** — An [FBI](#) official responsible for overseeing a controversial document targeting certain [Catholics](#) appeared before the [House Judiciary Committee](#) on Thursday to testify on the matter.

Stanley Meador, a special agent in charge at the FBI's Richmond Field Office, spoke with the committee for several hours in a behind-closed-doors interview, according to two sources familiar with the interview.

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Meador was named in a letter the FBI wrote to the committee on April 28 as an official involved with handling the fallout from the document, which included retracting it and meeting with Catholic leaders from the area about it, according to one of the sources.

The document had been issued internally within the FBI Richmond office in January and [leaked](#) to the media in redacted form soon thereafter, prompting vocal criticism from religious freedom advocates that it infringed on First Amendment rights.

The document detailed how there existed opportunities for the FBI to mitigate threats of violent extremism within "radical-traditionalist Catholic" ideology, including by engaging with leaders of affiliated churches and attempting to enlist them as "tripwires" who would operate like unofficial informants.

In a footnote on the document, an unidentified analyst said "radical-traditionalist Catholics" make up a "small minority of overall Roman Catholic adherents." They are characterized by "disdain" for popes elected after the Second Vatican Council and "frequent adherence to anti-Semitic, anti-immigrant, anti-LGBTQ, and white supremacist ideology," the analyst noted.

The Richmond office based its assessments on undercover work and other research, according to the document. The office included three isolated instances of alleged criminal activity by adherents of the religion as supporting evidence, as well as a list of "RTC [radical-traditionalist Catholic] hate groups" compiled by the Southern Poverty Law Center, a left-wing advocacy group.

In July, FBI Director [Christopher Wray](#) testified to the House Judiciary Committee that he had found the document "appalling."

It was "a single product by a single field office, which as soon as I found out about it, I was aghast and ordered it withdrawn and removed from FBI systems," Wray testified.

He noted that he was in the process of completing an internal review of the document's origins and that he would arrange a briefing with Congress of the review's findings. That briefing took place earlier this week, committee staff confirmed.

The briefing and Meador's testimony come after the committee also [released](#) this month a less redacted version of the document it had obtained. That version revealed that the FBI in Richmond had also relied on a "liaison contact" in the Portland Field Office and information from the Los Angeles Field Office to craft the document.

"This new information suggests that the FBI's use of its law enforcement capabilities to intrude on American's First Amendment rights is more widespread than initially suspected," committee Chairman Jim Jordan (R-OH) wrote, adding that it also revealed "inconsistencies" with Wray's testimony from July.

In a statement responding to the accusation, the FBI countered that Wray's testimony on the issue "has been accurate and consistent" and that while the document referenced other FBI offices' investigations into violent extremism, "that does not change the fact the product was produced by a single office" and was retracted for not meeting standards.

In response to a request for comment on this story, the FBI reiterated that the document did not meet standards and said it had taken new preventive measures.

"There were failures in the production and approval of the document and we have taken corrective actions to ensure future products meet the highest professional standards, which include new training initiatives, heightened approval requirements for intelligence products, holding employees accountable, and updating policy and guidance," the FBI stated.

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The bureau added that it is "committed to upholding the constitutional rights of all Americans. We investigate violence, threats of violence and violations of federal law. We do not conduct investigations based solely on First Amendment protected activity, including religious practices."

The Judiciary Committee, for its part, is expected to continue to conduct more interviews on the issue as part of its broader inquiry into alleged civil liberties violations by federal government agencies.