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FBI Office of Public Affairs

The Horizon

Friday, April 9, 2021

NATIONAL ISSUES

Discretionary Request: OPA – In anticipation of the Biden-Harris administration releasing its discretionary funding request, The New York Times sought an interview about the FBI's budget and allocation of resources toward domestic terrorism. The discretionary request would provide \$101 million to address the rising threat of domestic terrorism—while respecting civil rights and civil liberties—with \$45 million going to the FBI for DT investigations. OPA advised the FBI had no further comment outside previous remarks made by Director Wray and AD Sanborn.

Prince Andrew/Jeffrey Epstein: OPA – An L.A.-based London Sunday Mirror reporter asked about the FBI's continued investigation into Jeffrey Epstein and his interactions with Prince Andrew. The public photo of [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] was reportedly taken by Epstein in Ghislaine Maxwell's home in London. The reporter alleges that Prince Andrew's law firm has been providing information about the photo the past few weeks and asked if the FBI had been in contact with his law firm. In keeping with our standard practice, OPA declined comment.

Network Investigative Technique: OPA – A VICE reporter followed up on his previous inquiry about the FBI paying Innocent Lives Foundation for a network investigative technique. The payment was inadvertently posted on the procurement records website. The procurement record has since been removed and VICE asked who removed it and why. OPA continued to decline comment.

InfraGard Anniversary, fbi.gov: OPA – From a small group that started in 1996 to an organization more than 75,000 strong today, InfraGard brings together representatives from the private and public sectors to help protect our nation's critical infrastructure from attacks.

Link to story: <https://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/infragard-marks-25-years-of-protecting-infrastructure-through-partnerships-040921>

LOCAL STORIES

Boston/CJIS – A Boston Globe reporter asked for statistics on hate crimes in Lowell and how they compare to other cities. Additionally, she asked how specific incidents in 1979, 1985, 1987, and 2015 were classified. PAO referred her to the CJIS PAO, who said the FBI can only provide statistics, not specific information about

incidents. PAO also provided a link to 2019 hate crime statistics and referred her to the Lowell Police Department for specifics.

Boston – Several Massachusetts outlets continue to seek confirmation of FBI involvement in ransomware investigations in the cities of Lawrence and Haverhill. PAO declined comment, explaining that victims should feel confident that, when reporting a crime to the FBI, their status as “victim” is paramount to the investigation and that their identity will not be disclosed. PAO also provided tips on prevention and mitigation strategies.

Boston – SAC Bonavolonta provided a quote for a press release from the USAO–District of New Hampshire announcing today’s guilty plea by Melvin Stanford to distributing crack cocaine in the Nashua area as part of a drug trafficking conspiracy. Bonavolonta: “Putting Melvin Stanford and his fellow drug traffickers out of business is a win for the citizens of Nashua. The FBI and our partners will not cede our cities to drug pushers who have no regard for the harm and violence they bring into our neighborhoods.”

Buffalo – WAMC Northeast Public Radio interviewed CI SA Johnson for a national radio story on “Women in Law Enforcement” to air at a later date.

Chicago – Florida Today reporters called about the investigation into Penn Credit. FBI Chicago provided no comment.

Dallas – SAC DeSarno provided a quote for a press release from the USAO–Northern District of Texas announcing that Seth Aaron Pendley was charged with intent to attack a tech company. DeSarno: “The FBI’s highest priority is ensuring public safety and we thoroughly investigate all credible threats. We continually ask the public to report suspicious or threatening behavior to law enforcement, and in this instance, that vigilance may have prevented injuries and the destruction of property.”

Dallas – Responded to calls for more information about FBI activity in Wichita Falls. PAOs pointed reporters to the press release from the USAO–Northern District of Texas and to PACER for the complaint.

Dallas – Fielded calls requesting confirmation that the FBI is leading the investigation of a Bedford resident suspected of detonating an explosive device. PAOs explained that FBI Dallas is working with federal and local law enforcement partners and would advise if a change of jurisdiction occurs.

Louisville – SAC Brown provided the following quote for a press release from the USAO–Western District of Kentucky announcing three individuals were charged in connection with a Louisville carjacking and with child exploitation. Brown: “This investigation highlights the efforts of the Violent Crime Task Force in identifying, investigating, and ultimately arresting our most violent offenders. The perpetrators in this case took advantage of innocent bystanders, including children, for their own personal gain. This is just one example of how FBI Louisville is working diligently with our partners to protect the public from these predators.”

Louisville – SAC Brown participated in an interview about sex trafficking in the state of Kentucky and how cases tend to rise around the time of the Kentucky Derby. Brown discussed ways people can be trafficked, how to recognize trafficking victims, and how to report it. The interview is scheduled to air today.

Miami – A WPLG editor asked if the FBI was conducting a search warrant or arrest related to a female nurse at a local hospital who allegedly made threats to kill the vice president. Miami referred reporter to the U.S. Secret Service.

New York – ADIC Sweeney provided a quote for a press release announcing the arrest of a man wanted in Newburgh for a series of gas station robberies, armed home invasions, and serious physical assaults last month. Sweeney: “We’ve recently seen an uptick in violent offenses, and today I have a sincere warning for those planning similar violent behavior: think twice. Respect others’ property and belongings. The FBI and our law enforcement partners will track you down and hold you accountable for violent behavior. If you break federal law you will face federal penalties.”

Pittsburgh – KDKA interviewed SSA Lampo this week about COVID vaccines being sold on the dark web. He discussed the dangers of buying these vaccines on the dark web and talked about how scammers are using people’s fears of not getting the vaccine to make a profit. He also discussed why the FBI is working to make sure people know the dangers that exist on the dark web. The story airs Monday.

Pittsburgh – A/SAC Peeples provided a quote yesterday for a press release from the USAO–Western District of Pennsylvania after three family members were sentenced for health care fraud schemes targeting veterans. Peeples: “With these sentencing, the defendants will now be held accountable for their intentions to defraud our healthcare system. They’ll spend the next few years behind bars thinking about what their selfish actions cost them, the patients and our healthcare systems. This case involves \$60 million in penalties and forfeiture. It’s the largest forfeiture in a criminal case in the history of the Western District of Pennsylvania. I commend the work of the agents involved in our Erie office, which worked this case tirelessly from beginning to end, while having limited resources and working the numerous other violations the FBI investigates. This case will have an impact nationwide and should also serve as a warning to other companies who choose to operate with fraud schemes instead of honesty. The FBI is committed to working with our federal and public sector partners to stop fraud and ensure everyone receives quality medical care.”

Salt Lake City – SAC Rice hosted his first roundtable with Utah media. He discussed Bureau priorities, DVEs, hate crimes, cyber, and other issues. Rice emphasized the important role the public plays in our investigations. Representatives from all major TV affiliates attended.

San Francisco – The NBC affiliate interviewed the PAO about missing child Arianna Fitts on the fifth anniversary of the discovery of her mother’s remains. PAO issued a press release and social media campaign in coordination with the San Francisco PD and NCMEC. SAC Fair provided a quote: “We want to take the opportunity today to assure the public, and those who knew Nicole and Arianna, that we will continue to investigate this matter as long as it takes to find out what happened. This is a tragic situation for everyone involved. We would also like to thank everyone in our community for all the help you’ve given us over the years and are asking for your continued assistance and support.”

San Francisco – Announced the indictment of four members of the California Grizzly Scouts militia, who identify with the Boogaloo movement, for conspiring to destroy evidence in the case of Stephen Carrillo. He is accused of murdering a federal officer in Oakland last year. PAO is referring national and local media to the indictment.

San Francisco – SAC Fair issued the following quote about the guilty verdict in the federal hate crime trial of Ole Hougen for attacking a Black man on the street in Santa Cruz: “The FBI worked closely with the Santa Cruz Police Department to bring justice for this shocking, horrific attack. The FBI will use all authority granted to us by federal law to investigate hate crimes meant to threaten and intimidate an entire community. Acts of hate and racism have no place here and will not be tolerated. I urge members of our community to report any hate incidents to local or federal law enforcement so we can bring offenders to justice.”

Springfield – Received multiple inquiries from local news outlets about two separate search warrant and arrest operations. PAO confirmed that FBI Springfield conducted court-authorized activity at the locations in question

and directed the reporters to the USAO–Central District of Illinois.

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