Rosenberg Sons Say FBI Violates Records Order

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The sons of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg say the FBI has withheld thousands of pages of records on the Rosenberg atomic espionage case in "willful" violation of a court order that most of them be made public.

They have asked U.S. District Court to hold FBI Director Clarence M. Kelley and two FBI agents in contempt for allegedly failing to comply with a court order to release all records that are not exempted by law.

The Rosenberg sons, Robert and Michael Meeropol, had sued under the Freedom of Information Act for all records of the investigation and prosecution that led to conviction of their parents as atomic spies for the Soviet Union and their execution in 1953. A history professor independently filed a similar suit.

As a result of the suits, the FBI has released 29,900 pages of records.

Two FBI agents, Thomas Bresson and Cornelius Sullivan, said in affidavits that about 7,000 pages were withheld, all or in part, because they contain national security information, involve personal privacy or are exempt on other grounds.

Attorneys for the Meeropols charge that the FBI withheld nearly 800,000 pages rather than 7,000.

In a notion filed with U.S. District Court Dec. 22 but which went unnoticed at the time, they asked Judge June Green to hold Kelley and the agents in contempt and order them jailed if they continue to disobey orders she issued in the case Aug. 1 and Aug. 27.

They asked the judge to order the entire FBI Rosenberg files placed in the custody of a special master who would supervise what should be released and what withheld. The Justice Department has not replied.