

# Documents appear to contradict Sessions on probe

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Several newly released FBI documents apparently contradict recent congressional testimony by FBI Director William Sessions as to the reliability of Frank Varelli, a major figure in the FBI's five-year, nationwide investigation of the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador.

In apologizing to both the Senate Intelligence Committee and a House Judiciary subcommittee in September for FBI abuses during the investigation of the group, Sessions blamed Varelli for providing "unreliable" information to the FBI.

"By the time it was realized that Varelli's information was unreliable," Sessions said, the FBI's terrorism investigation "had been under way for approximately one year." That probe was opened in January 1983, according to FBI files.

But FBI documents filed last week in the US Claims Court in Washington in connection with a claims suit by Varelli indicate that FBI officials considered Varelli reliable as late as a year after he left the Bureau.

According to the documents, which apparently contradict Sessions' assessment, and which do not indicate any FBI reservation about Varelli's reliability:

● In May 1985, 2½ years after the investigation began, the Dallas FBI office "highly encouraged" the FBI's Houston field office to hire Varelli.

● In May 1984, nearly a year and a half after the terrorism probe began, a teletype from FBI headquarters said Varelli "can be of great benefit to the FBI in its Salvadoran terrorism investigations." Varelli "appears intelligent and eager to cooperate and work with the FBI." The document also indicates the FBI bought Varelli a car after the time that Sessions said the bureau had learned Varelli was unreliable.

● A July 1984 teletype indicated Varelli had passed an FBI polygraph examination, indicating that a review of the exam by personnel at FBI headquarters found the "examination is satisfactory."

## Varelli called scapegoat

Daniel Alcorn, Varelli's attorney, said, "The government's own documents support what we argued at the time of the Congressional inquiries — that Frank Varelli is being made a scapegoat for a much larger problem within the FBI. It is hard to understand how Director Sessions could have made the statements he did about Varelli's reliability if he had seen these documents."

Varelli, a Salvadoran who is a naturalized US citizen, worked with the FBI from June 1981 to August 1984, coordinating the investigation into the committee, known as CISPEP. In that capacity, he set up direct channels of communication between the FBI and the Salvadoran National Guard, infiltrated the Dallas chapter of CISPEP, and coordinated the work of 50 FBI agents in Arizona. The documents also indicate that

investigation of groups opposed to Reagan administration policies in Central America.

As a result of the probe, the FBI entered the names of thousands of individuals and hundreds of political groups in its computerized terrorism files. But the probe did not yield any arrests for terrorist or criminal activities.

Following an extensive FBI internal investigation, Sessions told the congressional committees the CISPEP probe was an "aberration" based on poor management and lax supervision. As a result, he said, he was disciplining six middle-level FBI officials.

Varelli left the FBI in mid-1984, when his case agent, Special Agent Daniel Flanagan, compromised his identity by losing several briefcases full of classified FBI documents.

## Says pay withheld

Varelli's claims suit against the FBI alleges that Flanagan withheld up to \$66,000 in FBI payments to Varelli.

The recently released documents apparently corroborate Varelli's claim and indicate that

Flanagan did, in fact, withhold money from Varelli.

An August 1984 teletype from William Webster, who was then the FBI director, instructed the Dallas office to inquire whether Varelli "would be willing to testify in any legal proceedings against Flanagan." Sessions told Congress that the FBI subsequently decided not to prosecute Flanagan on criminal charges.

The papers filed last week by Varelli's attorney indicate a history of FBI payments to Varelli existed.