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MFR 030/09/18

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Memorandum for the Record

Event: Interview of Paul George
Type of Event: On-the-Record Interview
Date of interview: 10/29/03
Date memo prepared: 11/05/03
Special Access Issues: None
Prepared by: John Roth
Team Number: 4
Location: Detroit FBI field office
Classification: Secret
Present, non-Commission: Pat O'Brien, Paul George
Participants-Commission: Serena Wille, John Roth and Doug Greenburg

This memorandum provides a summary of the most important points covered in the above-entitled interview, but is not a verbatim account. The memorandum is organized by subject and does not necessarily follow the order of the interview. The witness provided all of the information in this memorandum during the interview, except where noted by square brackets. (U)

Background

Paul George is the supervisor of the Detroit international terrorism squad. After graduating from Dickinson Law School in 1982 and working in private legal practice in Pittsburg for a year, George joined the FBI in 1983. From 1983 through 1987, he worked foreign counter-intelligence and terrorism investigations in Pittsburg, Tampa and New York.

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In 1998, he transferred to Detroit, where he was the only counter-terrorism supervisor until 2002. As a result of reorganization, counter-terrorism was split into a number of groups (see MFR of Larry Kuhl, 10/24/03). George became the supervisor of the international terrorism squad. When he started, he supervised 12 agents and was responsible for all terrorism, domestic or international. His IT squad has about 18 agents division wide, with about 12 in Detroit. (U)

Pre 9/11 intelligence collection

Detroit has the largest Middle Eastern population in the United States, and is a significant focus of counter-terrorist activity. As a result, prior to 9/11, George had to continually prioritize the types of investigations his squad would be able to do. Because of resource constraints he would routinely decline to open referrals from other field offices. George stated that he routinely requested more resources prior to 9/11 and was routinely denied

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them. George's first priority was to identify the operators (what he further described as "bomb throwers") -- those who were intending to commit terrorist acts within the United States. In order to do that, he had to increase his intelligence base by increasing the number of human sources that he had. He had some success in this area, doubling the number of human sources. These sources would travel overseas to gather information. To George, the Middle East was the best place to find out the actual identities and locations of the operational elements of terrorist cells in the U.S. (S)

George stated that FBI HQ was not really focused on human sources. They were more interested in getting FISA coverage, an emphasis that George disagreed with.¹ Headquarters never saw the need to encourage human sources. [redacted]

[redacted] 9/11 Classified Information [redacted]

George noted that the subsequent revelation that [redacted] demonstrated the error of Headquarters' approach to this issue.

Global Relief Foundation and Haddad

Detroit's connection to GRF was through the Chicago Field Office. [redacted] 9/11 Classified Information [redacted]

[redacted] Detroit attempted to get a FISA on Haddad and others but was unsuccessful. George thought that Detroit was simply not high on FBI HQ's list of priorities, so it would never get reviewed and approved. He also stated that there was quite a bit of miscommunication and friction between Detroit and HQ on a number of issues. George dealt with [redacted] at headquarters. [redacted]

[redacted] It was never an issue with the quality of the FISA applications, and he described the case agent, [redacted] as the best FISA agent in the squad. [redacted]

[redacted] Although they had their FISAs approved after 9/11, "by then it was too late." The subjects knew that they were being looked at, and any intelligence they could have obtained was gone. (S)

The post-9/11 FISAs did not yield much of anything, but George did not anticipate getting much once the investigation became overt. [redacted] There had been discussions prior to 9/11 along the same lines, and George opposed it then as well. (S)

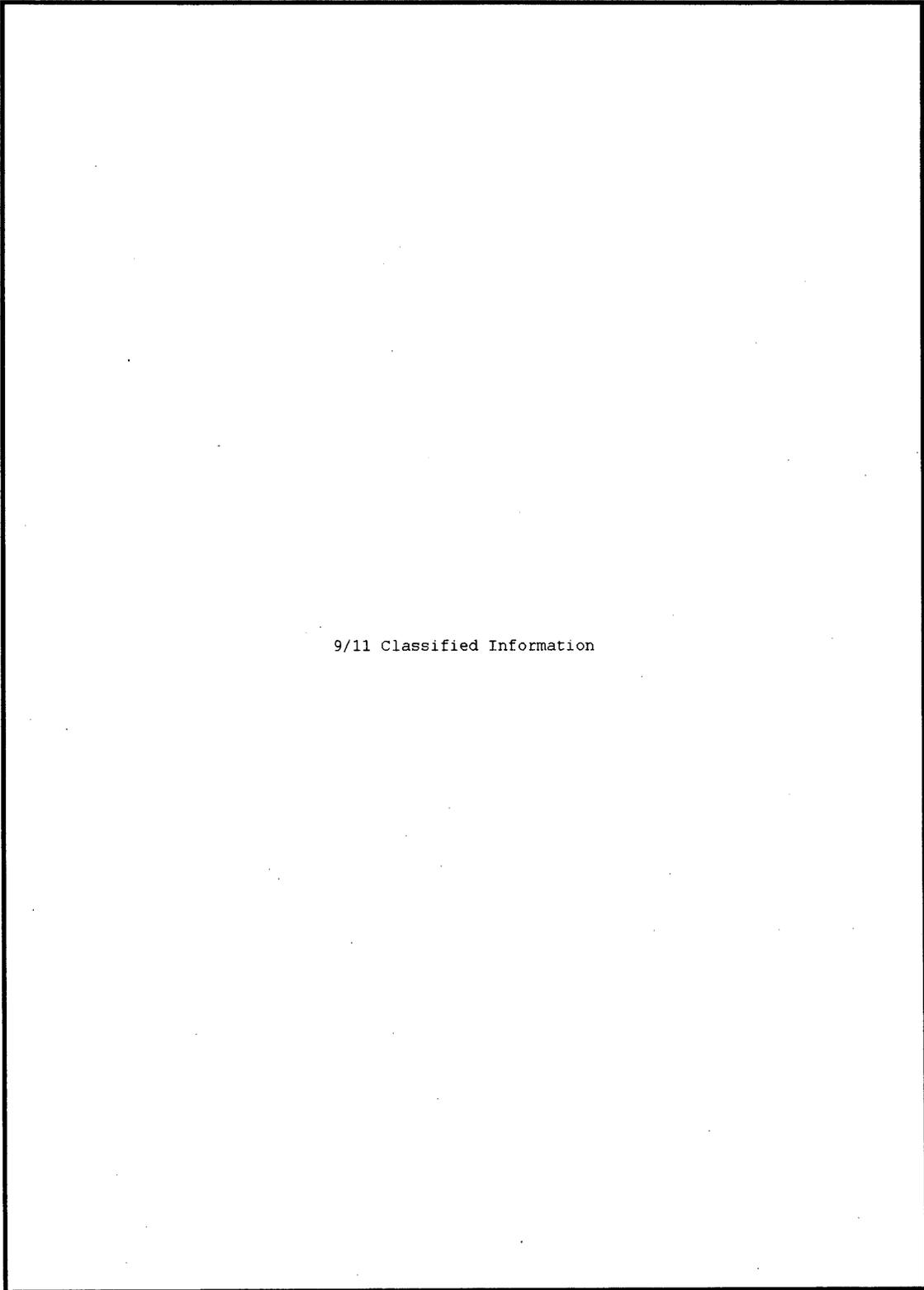
George had no further involvement in the Haddad case after Haddad was picked up and it went criminal. Essentially, Chicago was dealing with it. Almost every fundraising case in the Detroit Division was given to the criminal side. Because of the publicity involved in the focus on NGOs, there was little intelligence value in them. (S)

¹ When he arrived in 1988, Detroit was operating three FISAs [redacted] (S)

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Counterterrorism Strategy on Fundraisers and NGOs



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As far as improvement in the system, George believes that the FBI needs to have a more aggressive overseas program. He works with the FBI legats, which has a major role, and has no issue with them other than they have too much to do. (S)

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