

Written Testimony of Christopher J. O’Leary

U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary

Subcommittee on Federal Courts, Oversight, Agency Action, and Federal Rights

24 March, 2026

Introduction

Chairman, Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony. I provide these remarks in my personal capacity as a non-partisan former Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Special Agent with more than two decades of service to the United States. Prior to my career in the FBI, I served as a United States Marine. My professional life has been defined by a sustained commitment to the service of the nation, pursuit of justice, adherence to the rule of law, and protection of the Constitution.

The purpose of this submission is to offer the Committee an informed, experience-based perspective on FBI investigative practices, institutional culture, and the safeguards that govern investigative decision-making. I do not appear in support of any political party or policy position. Rather, I seek to provide factual context grounded in my professional experience.

Scope of Testimony

I did not personally participate in, supervise, or have direct knowledge of the investigation referred to as “Arctic Frost.” Accordingly, I do not offer any direct knowledge of the specific facts, findings, or determinations associated with that matter.

My informed testimony will be focused on describing the general principles, standards, and practices that governed FBI operations during my tenure. These observations are based on firsthand experience across multiple assignments, including field investigations, joint terrorism task force operations, and leadership roles within the Bureau.

Predication and the Opening of Investigations

A central question raised in connection with this hearing is whether FBI investigations may be influenced by political bias or initiated for partisan purposes. Based on my experience, I did not observe, nor was I aware of, any investigation that was initiated on the basis of political affiliation or ideology.

FBI investigations are predicated on facts. The Bureau operates under established guidelines that require a factual basis—derived from intelligence, evidence, or credible reporting—indicating a potential violation of federal law or a threat to national security. Political beliefs, associations, or viewpoints do not constitute predication and, in my experience, were not treated as such.

Agents are trained to articulate and document the factual basis supporting investigative actions. This requirement ensures that decisions to open, expand, or close investigations are grounded in objective criteria and are capable of withstanding internal and external review.

Oversight, Review, and Safeguards

The FBI operates within a framework of layered oversight designed to ensure compliance with the law and to prevent misuse of investigative authority. Investigative decisions are subject to supervisory review, legal oversight, and adherence to Department of Justice guidelines.

In practice, this includes:

- **Supervisory Oversight:** Investigative steps are reviewed and approved by supervisory personnel responsible for ensuring proper predication and proportionality.
- **Legal Review:** FBI attorneys and Department of Justice officials provide guidance and review, particularly in complex or sensitive matters.
- **Documentation Requirements:** Agents must maintain detailed records supporting investigative actions, enabling transparency and accountability.
- **Judicial Authorization:** Certain investigative techniques require court approval, adding an additional external safeguard.

In matters involving public officials or issues of heightened sensitivity, additional layers of scrutiny are typically applied to ensure that investigative actions are appropriate and consistent with established policies.

Institutional Culture and Professional Norms

Beyond formal policies, the internal culture of the FBI plays a critical role in shaping investigative conduct. The Bureau in which I served maintained a clear expectation that investigations be conducted free from political influence or personal bias.

As such, political discussions were absent from FBI work space and professional environments. In my experience, agents and analysts did not engage in conversations about political preferences in the workplace, nor were such considerations relevant to investigative decision-making. I was not aware of the political leanings of my colleagues, and such knowledge was neither sought nor considered necessary.

This cultural norm reinforced the principle that investigative decisions must be based solely on facts, law, and professional judgment. The integrity of the Bureau depended on that separation, and it was consistently upheld through leadership and peer accountability.

Leadership Responsibility and Accountability

As both an investigator and a leader, I understood the obligation to ensure that all investigative activities adhered to legal standards and institutional expectations. I did not engage in, observe, or condone conduct that would introduce political bias or improper influence into investigative work.

Had such conduct been identified, it would have required immediate corrective action. Leadership within the FBI carries with it a responsibility not only for operational outcomes but also for maintaining the integrity of the investigative process.

FBI - Fidelity, Bravery, and Integrity

The men and women of the Federal Bureau of Investigation have long stood as a quiet bulwark between order and chaos, guided not by politics or public acclaim, but by an enduring commitment to the Constitution and the rule of law. Their character is forged in an environment where integrity is not aspirational—it is required. Every day, often without recognition, they make decisions that demand moral clarity, professional restraint, and personal courage. These are not abstract virtues within the Bureau; they are lived expectations, reinforced through training, culture, and example.

Integrity within the FBI is not situational. It is the foundation upon which every investigation rests. Agents are entrusted with immense authority, and with that authority comes an unwavering obligation to act with honesty, objectivity, and fairness. The credibility of the Bureau—and indeed the justice system itself—depends on this principle. FBI professionals understand that their work must withstand scrutiny not only in the moment, but years later, in courtrooms, oversight hearings, and the court of public opinion.

Dedication to duty is equally defining. The work is often difficult, dangerous, and deeply personal. Agents and analysts routinely place themselves in harm's way, whether confronting violent criminals, disrupting terrorist plots, or countering hostile intelligence services. The hours are long, the burdens heavy, and the sacrifices real—borne not only by those who serve, but by their families. Yet there is a shared understanding that the mission transcends the individual. Service to the nation is not a slogan within the FBI; it is a calling.

This ethos is rooted in a tradition of excellence that spans generations. The legacy of the “G-man” is not merely a cultural artifact, but a standard—one that reflects professionalism, discipline, and an unyielding pursuit of truth. While the tools and threats have evolved—from bank robbers and organized crime to cyber adversaries and transnational terrorism—the core values have remained constant. Each new generation inherits not only the responsibilities of the role, but the weight of that legacy.

Few embody these ideals more fully than Robert Mueller. His life of service—first as a Marine officer, leading his Marines in combat in Vietnam, where he demonstrated his courage and selflessness, receiving a Bronze Star for his Valorous conduct, The Vietnam Cross of Gallantry, and a Purple Heart after being combat wounded during a firefight. After returning from Vietnam Bob Mueller could have ended his service

to the nation, having already done more than most of his fellow citizens, but his commitment to service would not allow that. Rather he continued his lifelong service to the nation as federal prosecutor, a leader at the Department of Justice, and ultimately as Director of the FBI. Mueller led during one of the most consequential periods in the Bureau's history, assuming command just one week before the attacks of September 11, 2001. In the years that followed, he guided the FBI through profound transformation, reshaping it to confront the evolving threat of global terrorism while preserving its core commitment to justice and the rule of law.

What set Mueller apart was not only his leadership, but his character. He was a quiet and humble professional—deliberate in judgment, disciplined in conduct, and unwavering in principle. He did not seek the spotlight, nor did he govern through rhetoric. Instead, he led by example, holding himself to the same exacting standards he expected of others. In doing so, he reinforced a culture where integrity was non-negotiable and service was its own reward. The example set by Robert Mueller established a standard of quiet professionalism, integrity, and disciplined leadership that permeated every level of the Bureau. Long after his departure, that example endures—shaping decision-making, reinforcing accountability, and continuing to guide the conduct of FBI personnel to this day.

In the final measure, the strength of the FBI lies not in its authorities or resources, but in its people. Men and women who, day after day, choose duty over comfort, principle over expedience, and service over self. Their work is often unseen, their successes frequently unheralded. But the nation they protect is safer because of their steadfast commitment—and because they carry forward a tradition defined not just by excellence, but by honor.

Assessment of Allegations of Political Targeting

The agents, analysts, and professional staff with whom I served are dedicated public servants committed to upholding the Constitution and protecting the American people. They approach their responsibilities with professionalism, discipline, and a clear sense of duty. Assertions that the FBI engages in broad or coordinated efforts to investigate individuals or groups based on political affiliation are inconsistent with my experience and understanding of the Bureau's structure and safeguards.

The combination of predication requirements, supervisory and legal review, documentation standards, and judicial oversight creates multiple points at which improper or unsupported investigative actions would be identified and challenged. While no system is immune from error, the framework in place is specifically designed to prevent the type of politically motivated conduct that has been alleged.

It is critical that any assessment of wrongdoing or missteps by the FBI be grounded in an accurate understanding of its investigations, operations, and professional standards and not based on unfounded allegations, conspiracy theories, or the isolated actions of a single bad actor.

Organizational Stability and Effectiveness

Recent shifts in leadership priorities and operational direction within the Federal Bureau of Investigation have raised concerns regarding the allocation of resources and the potential downstream impact on national security. While the FBI has always been a multi-mission organization, its national security and major investigative priorities—counterterrorism, counterintelligence, Transnational Organized Crime, Human Trafficking, and the investigation of significant cyber threats—require sustained focus, specialized expertise, and continuity of effort.

Decisions to redirect FBI personnel toward missions such as expanded support to immigration-related enforcement or visible foot patrols in Washington, D.C., represent a notable departure from traditional utilization of Bureau resources. These assignments are not only a waste and misuse of the exquisite capabilities of the FBI, but they also carry a measurable opportunity cost. FBI agents and analysts are trained to operate in complex investigative environments—developing human sources, analyzing intelligence streams, and conducting long-term national security investigations. When those capabilities are reassigned to functions that do not fully leverage that expertise, the Bureau’s ability to maintain pressure on sophisticated adversaries is diminished.

Diverting FBI resources away from National security investigations, Transnational Organized Crime, and Human Trafficking inevitably degrades the Bureau’s ability to sustain long-term intelligence driven investigations needed to mitigate these threats. These threats do not pause to accommodate internal reprioritization. Counterterrorism cases often require continuous monitoring and rapid exploitation of intelligence. Counterintelligence investigations demand patience, precision, and

long-term investment. Cyber threats evolve at a pace that requires constant attention and highly specialized skill sets. Human trafficking networks and transnational organized crime cases depend on continuity, specialized expertise, and deep coordination across jurisdictions—elements that are weakened when personnel and attention are redirected elsewhere. Even temporary diversion of experienced personnel can slow investigative tempo, create gaps in coverage, and increase the risk that emerging threats go undetected or insufficiently addressed.

The alarming removal and reassignment of scores of experienced FBI personnel under circumstances that appear to be politically influenced and without justification has created rampant instability throughout the FBI workforce. The FBI's strength lies not only in its authorities, but in the depth of experience and institutional knowledge held by its workforce. The loss of seasoned agents and leaders—particularly in critical mission areas—is disruptive to ongoing investigations, weakens mentorship structures, and erodes operational continuity. Equally significant is the impact on morale and professional confidence. FBI career professionals are now concerned that they could be fired at any time for simply doing their job and conducting lawful investigations that were assigned to them. The result is the erosion of trust and confidence in the impartiality of FBI leadership, apprehension by many to engage in any investigative action that may irritate the current administration or its supporters, and a desire by many to leave the FBI.

Taken together, these trends—resource diversion and workforce disruption—create a compounding effect. At a time when the current threat landscape is complex and elevated, as a result of the War with Iran and Great Power Competition—encompassing terrorism, state-sponsored espionage, and increasingly sophisticated cyber operations—it is essential that decisions reinforce rather than detract from the Bureau's priority missions, and avoid further reduction of investigative capacity, fragmentation of institutional knowledge, and dilution of focus on the most consequential threats facing the United States. Maintaining disciplined prioritization of resources and preserving the integrity and stability of the professional workforce are not administrative considerations; they are foundational to national security.

Conclusion

The effectiveness and legitimacy of the FBI depend on its independence from political influence. That independence is reinforced through training, institutional culture, and oversight mechanisms designed to ensure objectivity and accountability.

It is important to acknowledge that the FBI, like any large institution, must continually strive to improve and to maintain the confidence of the public it serves. Oversight by Congress is an essential component of that process, promoting transparency, accountability, and adherence to the rule of law.

President George Washington in his farewell address stressed that the health and survival of the Republic required in part that government leaders demonstrate virtue and avoid hyper-partisan endeavors - It is from that perspective that I submit this testimony.

I appreciate the Committee's attention to these matters and stand ready to provide any additional information that may assist in its work.

Respectfully submitted,

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Federal Bureau of Investigation