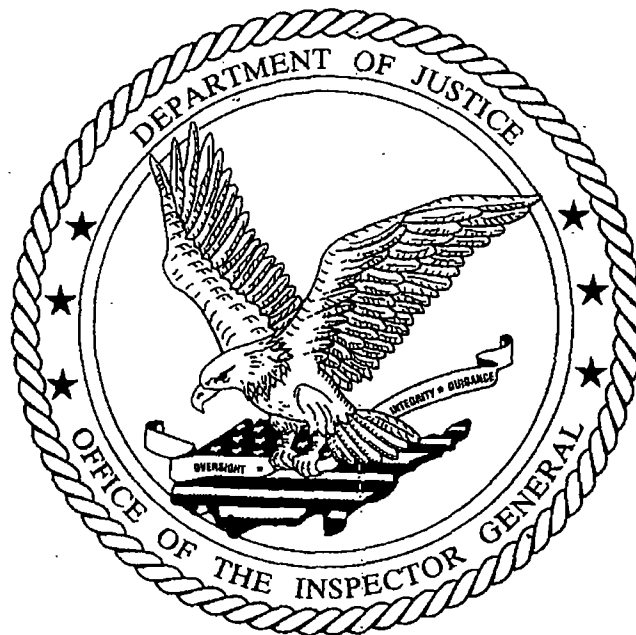


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# A Review of the FBI's Actions in Connection With Allegations Raised By Contract Linguist Sibel Edmonds



Office of the Inspector General  
Office of Oversight and Review  
July 1, 2004

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I. INTRODUCTION (U)

This report describes the Office of the Inspector General's (OIG) investigation of allegations raised by Sibel Edmonds, a former contract linguist for the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Edmonds worked for the FBI from September 20, 2001, until March 22, 2002.

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On March 22, 2002, the FBI stopped using Edmonds' translation services and on March 26 terminated her contract. (U)

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**II. OIG INVESTIGATION (U)**

During the course of our investigation, the OIG interviewed more than 50 individuals, including FBI employees, contractors, and Department of Justice (DOJ) officials. The OIG interviewed Edmonds on three separate occasions in April, June, and November of 2002. On January 28, 2004, the OIG wrote to Edmonds' attorney offering to meet with Edmonds again if she had additional relevant information to provide to the OIG. Her attorney said that Edmonds did not believe she had anything additional to provide the OIG, and the attorney did not request an additional meeting. In addition, we obtained and reviewed thousands of pages of FBI documents relating to Edmonds' allegations, including e-mails, notes, and other records. We also sought from another federal government agency outside the DOJ expert assistance with translations and other matters. (U)

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\* The FBI conducted a classification review of this report and classified the report at the secret level. The paragraphs of the report that the FBI has classified as secret are marked. (U)

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**III. BACKGROUND (U)**

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In this section of the report, we provide brief biographical and background information on Edmonds

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[Redacted] We also describe the FBI's Language Service Section, which manages the FBI's language program and its linguists.

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**A. Edmonds (U)**

**1. Biographical Information (U)**

[Redacted]

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Before joining the FBI, Edmonds handled retail sales for her husband's camera business. Edmonds also worked as a volunteer at the Alexandria, Virginia courthouse as a court-appointed special advocate for children and for the Rostropovich foundation, a non-profit organization that delivers medical supplies and food to a children's hospital in St. Petersburg, Russia. Edmonds also served as a corporate officer (Secretary) for her husband's network computer consulting business. (U)

<sup>1</sup> According to various media accounts, Edmonds has made additional allegations relating to the September 11 terrorist attacks and to the allegedly inappropriate reaction by other FBI linguists to those attacks. Edmonds never raised those allegations to the OIG, and we have not investigated them in this review. Rather, we understand that staff from the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States have interviewed Edmonds regarding these claims. (U)

In addition, our investigation did not review allegations regarding unauthorized disclosure of information to the media. We did not address Edmonds' allegation, contained in a lawsuit she filed against the FBI, that her Privacy Act rights were violated by FBI disclosures about her, nor do we address the FBI's claim that Edmonds improperly disclosed classified information

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2. Hiring Process (U)

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Pursuant to instructions in the offer letter, Edmonds completed on June 4, 1998, an SF-86 Questionnaire for National Security Positions – the standard form used by the federal government to collect information for background investigations of persons applying for positions that require a security clearance. As part of the background investigation, Edmonds was polygraphed on December 4, 1998. The FBI also conducted a Personal Security Interview (PSI) of Edmonds on December 16, 1998. Her security file does not reflect any activity on her background investigation during 1999. It appears that through a series of oversights and lack of follow through, the FBI did not take action on her background investigation during this time period, and therefore Edmonds did not begin work as a contract linguist during this time period. (U)

In February 2000, the FBI asked Edmonds to submit another SF-86. In April 2001, the Language Services Section wrote a memorandum [REDACTED] requesting that the PSI be updated, and asking that the necessary work be done to complete the background investigation. The FBI conducted supplemental PSIs of Edmonds on May 1, 2001, and July 19, 2001. On September 13, 2001, four years after she first submitted her application, the FBI granted Edmonds a "Top Secret" clearance. No job interview was conducted other than the PSIs.

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<sup>2</sup> The various linguist positions in the FBI are described more fully in the next section of this report. In brief, a CM can provide summary translations of oral and written communications, and analysis of those translations, for internal dissemination. In addition to those services, CLs also can act as interpreters in FBI interviews, review material produced by other linguists, produce written communications for internal and court dissemination, and testify as expert witnesses in federal court. A CL can perform the same duties as a Language Specialist (LS), which is the term for a linguist who is a permanent employee of the FBI. (U)

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**C. The FBI's Language Service Section, FBI Security Clearances** [Redacted]

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**1. FBI Language Service Section Structure and Operations (U)**

**a. Organization (U)**

In the early 1980s, the FBI began hiring linguists for translation, interpretation, and other language services necessary for the FBI's work. Before that, the FBI used Special Agents to perform such services. The number of linguists hired by the FBI has grown from a mere handful in 1983 to over 1,100 by 2002. (U)

Through its Foreign Language Program (FLP), the FBI seeks to ensure that the language needs of its field offices and Headquarters units are met. The FLP and the personnel who perform language services for the FBI are directed by the Language Services Section (LSS). LSS personnel handle approximately 60 languages covering 95 percent of the world's population.

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Since March 2002, the LSS has been placed within the Office of International Operations at FBI Headquarters, which is under the jurisdiction of the FBI's Director for Law Enforcement Services. Immediately before the March 2002 reorganization, LSS was part of the Investigative Services Division.<sup>3</sup> A copy of the FBI's current organizational chart is attached as Appendix A. (U)

During the early part of 2002, the time relevant to this review, LSS was composed of three units. The Language Training and Assessment Unit (LTAU) was responsible for developing and conducting language assessments of FBI applicants and personnel. The LTAU also provided foreign language and cultural training to FBI personnel. The Translation and Deployment Unit (TDU) managed national translation and interpreting resources in support of the FBI's investigative and administrative priorities. The TDU ensured that linguists were assigned to field offices requesting their services or that a requesting office's work was sent to available linguists. The Language Administration and Acquisition Unit (LAAU) handled the administrative functions of the FLP. The LAAU also was responsible for hiring linguists and for researching, acquiring, and integrating language-related technologies. An organizational chart for the Language Services Section, dated November 13, 2001, is attached as Appendix B. (U)

**b. Types of Linguists (U)**

The FBI uses three types of linguists. First, the FBI has permanent employees known as Language Specialists. Language Specialists (LS) provide translations of written or oral communications and analyze those translations. They also can act as interpreters in FBI interviews, review material produced by other linguists, produce written communications for internal and court dissemination, and testify as expert witnesses in federal court. (U)

In addition, the FBI uses contract employees as linguists. The Contract Linguist Program (CLP), which is administered by the LAAU, enables the FBI to acquire linguist resources without adding permanent employees. It also gives the FBI the opportunity to recruit permanent LS from linguists who already have been evaluated through the CLP. (U)

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<sup>3</sup> Before that, LSS had been placed, at various times, in the Laboratory Division and the Criminal Investigative Division. (U)

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The FBI uses two types of contractors with different skill levels, CLs and CMs. Linguists' designation as CL or CM depends upon their performance on language tests administered by the LSS.<sup>4</sup> (U)

According to the LSS [redacted] Operational Manual, CLs perform translation duties similar to those of Language Specialists.<sup>4</sup> CLs provide translations of written or oral communications and analyze those translations. They also act as interpreters in FBI interviews, review material produced by other linguists, produce written communications for internal and court dissemination, and testify as expert witnesses in federal court. (U)

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The FBI created the additional position of "Contract Language Monitor" (CM) in response to a critical need for linguists and the inability to find a sufficient number of linguists who qualify for LS or CL positions. A CM can provide summary translations of oral communications and analysis of those translations, and written communications for internal dissemination. [redacted]

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<sup>4</sup> In this report, the generic terms "linguist" or "translator" refer to any of the three categories - LS, CL, and CM. (U)

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c. Linguist Responsibilities and Procedures (U)

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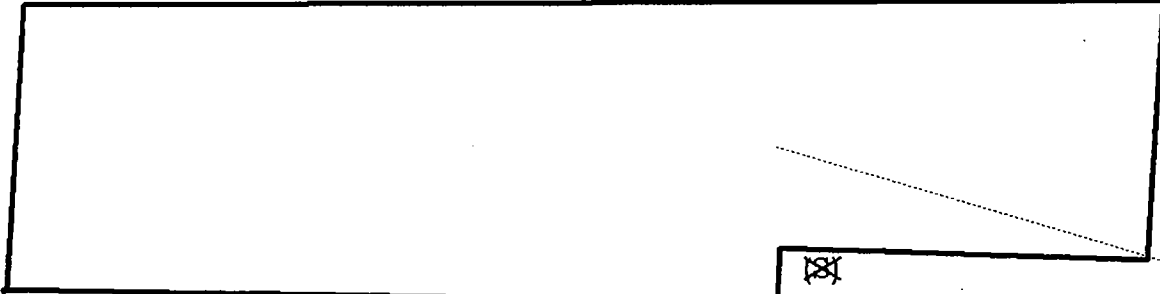
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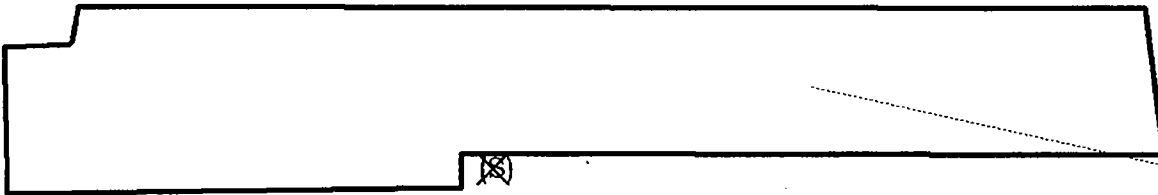
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**2. FBI Headquarters Security Clearances (U)**

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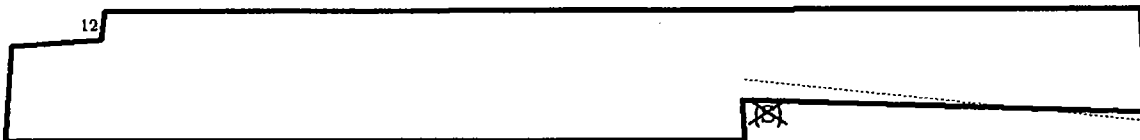
**a. SF-86 (U)**

In order to obtain a security clearance, FBI applicants must fill out an SF-86 form, *Questionnaire for National Security Positions*. The SF-86 is the standard form used by federal government agencies to collect information for background investigations and reinvestigations of persons applying for, or incumbents in, national security positions.<sup>11</sup> The form consists of nine pages of questions addressing the following areas: identifying information, citizenship, residences, education, employment history, marital status/history, relatives and associates, military history, foreign travel and activities, a limited medical inquiry, police record, use of illegal drugs and drug activity, financial record, civil court actions, and associations with anti-United States organizations. (U)

**b. Personal Security Interview (U)**

In addition to filling out the SF-86 form, an individual whose background is being investigated by the FBI must undergo a Personnel Security Interview (PSI).<sup>12</sup> According to the instructions on the SF-86, the interview is an

<sup>11</sup> According to the SF-86, the group of people requiring background investigations for determining eligibility for a security clearance include military personnel and applicants or incumbents in national security positions, either employed by the Government or working for Government contractors, licensees, certificate holders, and grantees. SF-86. (U)



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"opportunity to update, clarify, and explain information on your form more completely." According to the FBI's Manual of Investigative Operations and Guidelines (MIOG), the interview must be conducted at the "inception of the [background] investigation with the purpose of obtaining information to facilitate our investigative efforts," and "to ensure that complete (current and accurate) information is available concerning the candidate." MIOG Part 2, Section 17-5.6 (U)

According to the MIOG and an FBI All Field Office Electronic Communication (EC) dated October 11, 2002, areas to be covered in the background investigation include personal and business credit issues, denials and dismissals from employment, business circumstances that could lead to conflict-of-interest allegations, membership or involvement in organizations that are discriminatory and organizations that advocate activities against the interest of the United States, and concealment of any activity that could be used to compromise the applicant or have an adverse affect on their character. MIOG Part 2 Section 17-5.6. (U)

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**c. Pre-employment Polygraph (U)**

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**d. Risk Assessment (U)**

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The Language Services Section conducts the background investigation and the pre-employment polygraph to ensure that the candidate is suitable for employment. The applicant's file is then passed to the Initial Clearance and Access Unit (ICAU) in the Personnel Security Section within the FBI's Security

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Division.<sup>13</sup> ICAU's function is to determine if the applicant will be granted a security clearance. (U)

The adjudicators within ICAU may request that a risk assessment be performed. A risk assessment is meant to address any security concerns that surface during the applicant's background investigation, including those that might indicate the applicant's vulnerability to coercion.

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According to ICAU Unit Chief [REDACTED] the decision to conduct a risk assessment for an applicant depends on the specific circumstances of the case. [REDACTED]<sup>15</sup> He stated that as of March 2004, risk assessments are completed for approximately 95 percent of applicants for contract linguist positions.

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**e. Security Briefing and Forms (U)**

If ICAU determines that a potential contractor should be granted a security clearance, a Security Officer gives that person a security briefing. The purpose of the briefing is to inform individuals that they may not disclose sensitive or classified information obtained while working for the FBI, and to inform the individuals of the consequences for unauthorized disclosure. (U)

At the briefing, new contractors sign a Security Acknowledgement Form in which they acknowledge that they understand the information provided in the briefing and agree to adhere to instructions printed on the form for handling classified information. They also sign a Classified Information

<sup>13</sup> Before the creation of the Security Division in December 2001, the duties were performed by the Industrial Security Unit within the National Security Division. (U)

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<sup>15</sup> Throughout this report, individuals are identified using the title they held at the time of the event or action under examination. (U)

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Nondisclosure Agreement. The Agreement is an 11-point agreement between the individual and the United States government stating that the individual possesses a security clearance for access to classified information, has been briefed about security responsibilities, and will not improperly divulge classified information. The agreement also sets forth the potential punishments for improperly divulging classified information. Until the form is signed, the individual does not have clearance and cannot have access to national security information. (U)

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a. [redacted] (S) b1

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Language Specialists who have been promoted to the position of Supervisory Language Specialist (SLS) serve as first-line supervisors [redacted]

(S) [redacted] They assign work to translators, manage personnel issues, and identify training opportunities for their staff. [redacted]

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(S) [redacted] Approximately two months after Edmonds started work [redacted] supervisor retired. [redacted]

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The linguists [Redacted] are organized into groups according to their language specialty. Each group of linguists for a particular language is referred to as a "board." Each SLS supervises several boards. ~~(S)~~

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The special agents who serve as Security Officers are responsible for processing administrative paperwork for FBI employees, contractors, and others who needed security clearances, country clearances, and travel warnings. They also pass clearances to other organizations. The Security Officer also provides security briefings and covers leads for background investigations. (S)

(S)

Security Officers also conduct investigations of reported and suspected security violations. The types of violations they investigate include using home computers to process classified information, processing Top Secret information on the internal FBI Secret network, unauthorized access to FBI files, and sharing computer passwords. (U)

IV. [Redacted] (S)

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(S) [Redacted] In the next section, we describe each of Edmonds' allegations and the evidence to support or refute them. (S)

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A. Arrival of Edmonds [Redacted] (S) (S)

Edmonds began work at the FBI on September 20, 2001. [Redacted] (S)

[Redacted] At her request, she worked part-time for approximately 20 hours per week

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<sup>18</sup> If a CM does a verbatim translation, a CL must review it, because the CM is not qualified to perform verbatim translations. Even if a CM does a summary translation of a document, procedures include a review by another linguist. (S)

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3. Response by Edmonds' Supervisors (U)

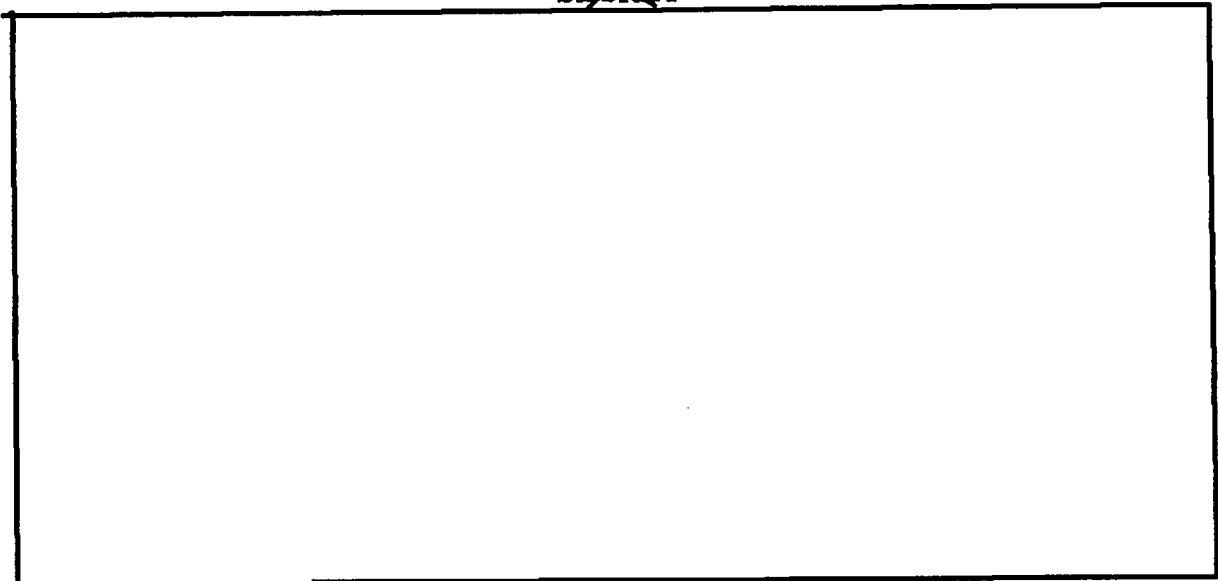
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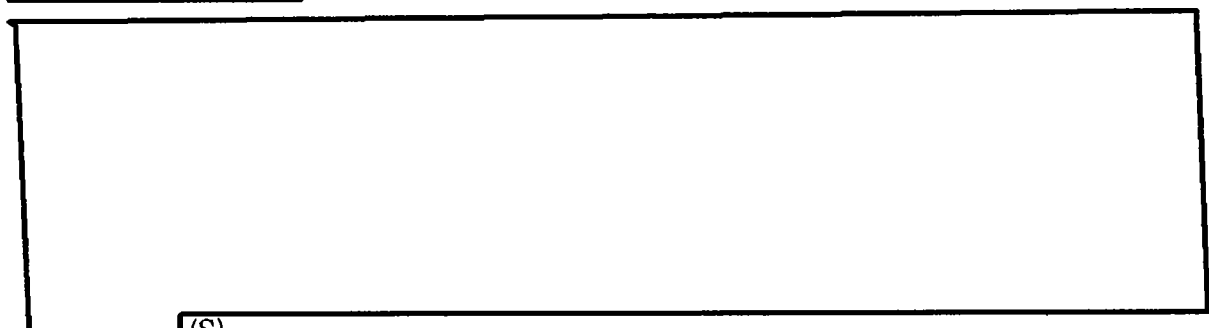
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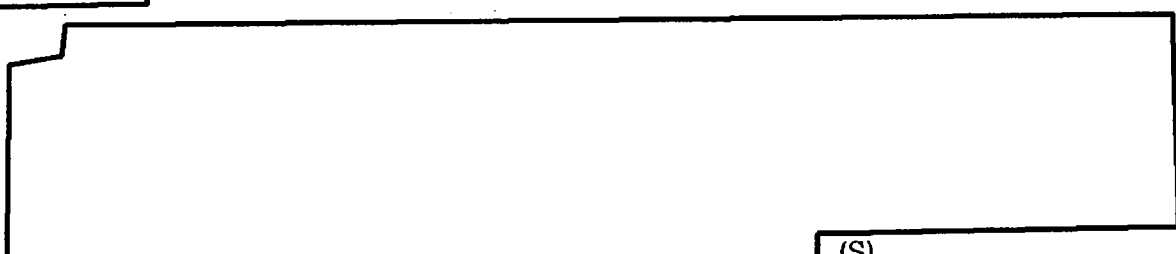
b1  
b6  
b7C

(S)



b1  
b6  
b7C

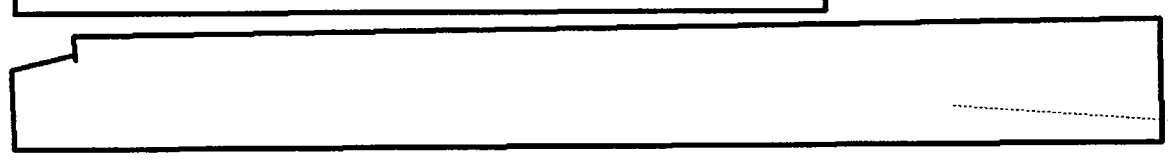
(S)



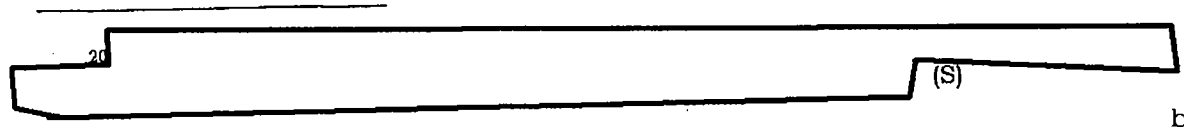
b1  
b6  
b7C

(S)

b1  
b6  
b7C



(S)



(S)

b1

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

[Redacted]

b1  
b6  
b7C

(S)

[Redacted]

b1  
b6  
b7C

(S)

[Redacted]

b1  
b6  
b7C

(S)

**4. Edmonds Documents Additional Complaints on a February 8 Memorandum Written on Her Home Computer (U)**

[Redacted]

b1  
b6  
b7C

(S)

[Redacted]

b1  
b6  
b7C

(S)

b1  
b6  
b7C

[Redacted]

(S)

[Redacted]

b1  
b6  
b7C

(S)

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

[Redacted]

b1  
b6  
b7C

(S)

[Redacted]

b1  
b6  
b7C

(S)

b1

(S) - D. [Redacted]

[Redacted]

b1  
b6  
b7C

(S)

[Redacted]

b1  
b6  
b7C

(S)

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

[Redacted]

(S)

b1  
b6  
b7C

[Redacted]

(S)

b1  
b6  
b7C

[Redacted]

(S)

b1  
b6  
b7C

[Redacted]

(S)

b1  
b6  
b7C

[Redacted]

(S)

b1  
b6  
b7C

[Redacted]

(S)

b1  
b6  
b7C

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

[Redacted]

b1  
b6  
b7C

(S)

[Redacted]

b1  
b6  
b7C

(S)

[Redacted]

b1  
b6  
b7C

(S)

[Redacted]

b1  
b6  
b7C

(S)

[Redacted]

(S)

b1  
b6  
b7C

26  
~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

[Redacted] (S)

b1

[Redacted] (S)

b1  
b6  
b7C

[Redacted] (S)

b1  
b6  
b7C

[Redacted] (S)

b1  
b6  
b7C

[Redacted] (S)

b1  
b6  
b7C

<sup>24</sup> In a March 7, 2002, fax she sent to the OIG, Edmonds included a copy of a version of her February 8, 2002, memorandum

[Redacted] (S)

b1

~~SECRET~~

E. Follow-up by Edmonds' Supervisors (U)

[Redacted]

b1  
b6  
b7C

(S)

[Redacted]

b1  
b6  
b7C

(S)

[Redacted]

b1  
b6  
b7C

(S)

b1  
b6  
b7C

[Redacted]

(S)

[Redacted]

b1

(S)

[Redacted]

b1  
b6  
b7C

(S)

~~SECRET~~



~~SECRET~~

[Redacted]

(S)  
b1  
b6  
b7C

(S)

[Redacted]

b1  
b6  
b7C

(S)

[Redacted]

b1  
b6  
b7C

(S)

27 [Redacted] Edmonds claimed that documents were  
deleted from her computer. [Redacted] ascribed this to Edmonds' having shared her password with  
(S) another linguist and [Redacted] told Edmonds to change her password.

(S)

b1

[Redacted]

b1  
b6  
b7C

(S)

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

b1

[Redacted]

b6

b7C

(S)

(S) F: [Redacted]

~~(S)~~

b1

[Redacted]

b1

b6

b7C

(S)

[Redacted]

b1

b6

b7C

(S)

b1

b6

G. Polygraph

[Redacted]

(S)

b7C

[Redacted]

b1

b6

b7C

(S)

[Redacted]

28

b1

(S)