

Jeffrey S. Kerr
General Counsel and
Director of Corporate Affairs
Ext. 8303
E-mail: JeffK@fsap.org

April 9, 2004

The Honorable Robert S. Mueller, III
Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation
J. Edgar Hoover Building
935 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington DC 20535-0001

Re: False and Defamatory FBI Statements against PETA

Dear Director Mueller:

I am general counsel to People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, Inc. (PETA), a non-profit charitable organization and the largest animal rights group in the world with more than 800,000 members and supporters. The purpose of this letter is to inform you of what appears to be a disturbing pattern of illegal conduct by FBI agents in violation of PETA's constitutional rights. I ask that you undertake an immediate investigation into this situation and I seek your assurance that such conduct will be corrected, including suitable punishment, and will not be allowed or tolerated again by the FBI, and that we be informed of what measures are taken toward this end.

Improper Conduct

According to an excerpt of a March 31, 2004, article by Daniel Yovich appearing on the Internet web site Meatingplace.com, two FBI agents assigned to the Bureau's domestic terrorism division and appearing at a conference sponsored by the North American Meat Processors Association, falsely and maliciously accused PETA of having financial dealings with the Earth Liberation Front (ELF). Special Agent Jeremy Ashcroft is quoted as saying, "One of their [ELF] biggest supporters is PETA." Special Agent Christopher Hilgers is quoted as saying that the Bureau has been able "to backtrack [funding] of \$3,000 to \$4,000 per month" from PETA to ELF members, "and nobody can explain why PETA is giving them the money." These statements are categorically false and they were either made up by the agents or came from false sources and we request the source of the information. Indeed, the comments are libelous per se and subject to civil claims if we cannot otherwise resolve this outrageous conduct. PETA's expenditures always have been, and always will be, solely and entirely consistent with PETA's charitable mission of speaking out against animal exploitation.

PETA
FOUNDATION

PEOPLE FOR THE ETHICAL
TREATMENT OF ANIMALS
FOUNDATION

101 PENN ST
SUITE 1000
PHILADELPHIA PA 19106
TEL: 215 399 7143
FAX: 215 399 7143
WWW.PETA.ORG

101 PENN ST
SUITE 1000
PHILADELPHIA PA 19106
TEL: 215 399 7143
FAX: 215 399 7143
WWW.PETA.ORG

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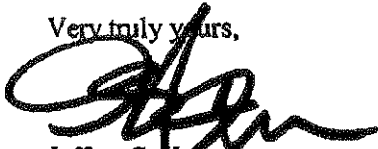
Moreover, I request an explanation of the circumstances by which FBI agents came to speak about such matters before a meat-industry trade group engaged in the very conduct against which many of PETA's charitable educational campaigns are directed. Such actions and statements demonstrate a disturbing bias against PETA based not on any facts, but upon improper industry influence and clearly malicious intent based upon false statements. For such defamatory statements to be made by FBI agents, carrying the full force of their law enforcement authority, is particularly odious given the potential chilling effect such statements can have on the willingness of people to associate with PETA or to assist in our efforts to curtail animal suffering. As you can readily see, this course of conduct carries dire constitutional implications.

Even more ominously, this appears to be part of a disturbing pattern of FBI activity reminiscent of the infamous COINTELPRO days. Recently, during an investigation entirely unrelated to PETA, an agent from the Bureau's San Francisco office made similarly defamatory statements against PETA directly to a person who had been identified as a PETA donor. A copy of my complaint letter dated March 11, 2004, to Special Agent in Charge Mark J. Mershon is enclosed for your reference. In addition, FBI agents have begun harassing current and former PETA employees about matters that are wholly unrelated to PETA and have nothing whatsoever to do with PETA's charitable mission.

Please understand that we fully support the FBI's difficult task of investigating and preventing terrorist acts. PETA itself has been the frequent target of terrorist threats of which we have informed the FBI, local law enforcement, and the postal authorities on previous locations. What we do not support, and will not abide, is being defamed by law enforcement personnel who are sworn to uphold and protect the Constitution, not subvert it by using their office to smear entirely lawful and peaceful organizations like PETA.

Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to hearing from you that this matter is being thoroughly investigated and that such offending conduct against PETA will cease immediately.

Very truly yours,



Jeffrey S. [unclear]

Enclosure

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