



High Court Won't Pick Up FBI Whistleblower Case

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Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A former FBI translator failed Monday to persuade the Supreme Court to revive her lawsuit alleging she was fired for reporting possible wrongdoing by other linguists involved in counterterrorism investigations.

The high court also rebuffed a request by **Sibel Edmonds** and media groups to rule on whether an appellate court improperly held arguments in the case in secret without being asked to do so by either side.

"When courts are sealed, the public may suspect the worst and lose faith in their government simply because they are prohibited access," wrote lawyers for media groups, including The Associated Press.

Edmonds, 32, who was hired after the **Sept. 11, 2001**, terrorist attacks and fired in March 2002, argued that a trial court judge was wrong to accept the Justice Department's claim that allowing her lawsuit to go forward would threaten "state secrets," or national security.

The former translator claimed the FBI terminated her contract after she complained about the quality of translations of terrorism-related wiretaps and had reported that another translator was leaking information to targets of investigations.

At the time, the FBI said it fired Edmonds because she had committed security violations and had disrupted the translation unit at the bureau's Washington field office where she worked.

Edmonds' firing was controversial among some lawmakers in Congress, especially after the Justice Department's inspector general found that the **FBI** had not taken her complaints seriously enough and had fired her for lodging complaints about the translation unit.

Her lawyers argued the government should not be allowed to use the "state secrets privilege" to silence whistleblowers, such as Edmonds, who reveal "national security blunders."

U.S. District Judge Reggie B. Walton dismissed Edmonds' lawsuit in 2004 after then-Attorney General John Ashcroft invoked the "state secrets privilege" before Justice Department lawyers had responded to any of the case's allegations.

News organizations wanted the court to clarify when and how appellate arguments over civil lawsuits can be closed to the public.

"Closing cases that involve allegations of government wrongdoing ... fosters public doubts about the private justice that certain people and entities get in the public courts, harms public debate about the issues involved ... and perhaps most devastatingly, fosters an appearance of unfairness that the government can close off access to the public courts when it is under fire," the media lawyers said in a friend-of-the-court filing.

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