

# COLD CASE TEAM'S FOIA SUIT OPENS SECRET "COOPER" FILE

*But FBI keeps a key record from American public – involving sleuths' living target*



**L to R:** Team at Fed Court, 9/8/16; FBI sketch; vet's 1970 pic; his phony "Lt. Colonel" uniform (1 of 22 fake IDs).

**3/30/17 Press Release (Washington, DC):** Six months after a cold case team spearheaded by retired FBI sued to gain access to the archived D.B. Cooper file, the Department of Justice is now "under court order to [begin] processing responsive records" from the unsolved 1971 hijacking case for public release.

But Asst. US Attorney Jeremy Simon followed up the judge's FOIA edict with an emailed caveat to Mark S. Zaid, lawyer for the independent team: *"It is the FBI's policy that, absent a privacy act waiver or proof of death, the FBI can [not] provide records pertaining to specific individuals"* that were once suspected.

"Individuals" like **Robert W. Rackstraw Sr.**, now 73 – the focus of this private investigation for six years. The team and several lawmen once assigned to his hunt believe the Special Forces-trained Vietnam paratrooper, pilot, explosives expert and four-time felon was wrongly cleared by the agency in 1979.

*"If Rackstraw is an innocent man, why not just show us? What is the FBI hiding?"* said team member Shannen Rossmiller, a former Bureau cyber-spy asset and Montana judge.

*"Director [James] Comey should be ashamed of the way his former agents are being treated,"* said Thomas J. Colbert, the team's organizer. *"The Bureau closed the case on us last year without warning, claiming leads and resources are exhausted. If that's true, why do they keep digging for Jimmy Hoffa?"*

Colbert and his partner-wife, Dawna, have FBI emails stretching back to 2011 that show Headquarters and Seattle Division – including Cooper Case Agent Curtis Eng – have been discreetly collaborating with the volunteer team. One dated 8/15/12 states *"the FBI welcomes any further information you uncover."*

Trouble began, however, in late 2015 when the sleuths revealed they had close to 100 pieces of new evidence on Rackstraw – including DNA, letter trails, a sister's death-bed confession and secret aliases. The Colberts assert Comey's executives then canceled a promised team meeting in 2016, refused to accept the case materials and sent the closed Cooper file off to a locked archive in Washington, D.C.

Some of the team's most esteemed investigators believe the reason may involve ego. Retired G-man Jim Reese, a former FBI profiler and Behavioral Science Unit pioneer, added: *"Rule number one was you don't embarrass the Bureau. This door-slam was politics, pure and simple."*

**FYI (6/6/19):** After losing the 2016 FOIA, Dir. Comey's senior staff began whiting out massive amounts of the old case's 71,000 pages – including the names of streets, towns, landmarks, dead witnesses, field agents, even FBI references to "D.B. Cooper" (See pgs. 2-3). Purge is costing taxpayers an estimated 6 figures a year; at the present rate of release, it will take 11 years (\$7 figures) to censor the full 1971 file.

**NOTE: Available:** Rackstraw Contact #s, Book, articles, video, court docs and research at [DBCooper.com](http://DBCooper.com)

**VIDEO: Watch** team's 2013 San Diego Camera Ambush of Rackstraw (3½ minutes): <http://bit.ly/2amxQOV>

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# SAMPLES OF FBI REDACTIONS & DISINFORMATION

Names, locations and contacts for these 2 key witnesses to Cooper's escape are whited out.

OPTIONAL FORM NO. 10  
MAY 1962 EDITION  
GSA FPMR (41 CFR) 101-11.6

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

**Memorandum**

TO : SAC, SEATTLE (164-81) (P) [redacted] 12/17/72

FROM : SA THOMAS J. MANNING

SUBJECT: NORJAK

On 4/15/72 [redacted] advised telephonically that on or about the day after the hijacking he observed a white male in the Amboy area, man of medium height, carrying a brown brief case, walking down the road after he came out of the wood line. This man was wearing a medium brown suit.

**LEAD:**

**SEATTLE**

At [redacted] Washington

Contact [redacted] and exhibit composite photo in captioned case. Secure all details re his sighting of white male and set appropriate leads.

THIS LEAD WILL BE COVERED BY SA STEPHENSON.

*Musub observed near Amboy, Wash*

Six separate farmland witnesses in Amboy told FBI they "heard a jet airplane" in storm, "flying south at an unusually low altitude, creating enough noise to shake [a] house." Two of which claimed, right after, to see a "well-dressed man" oddly walking.

TO: SAC, SEATTLE (164-81)

FROM: SAC, PORTLAND (164-41) (P)

SUBJECT: NORJAK  
(OO: Seattle)  
BuFile 164-2111

On 12/7/76, [redacted] Portland, Oregon, advised that on [redacted] the [redacted] area where instant hijacking ended in 1971 [redacted] While there he talked with a [redacted] and [redacted] developments known to her in the case. [redacted] replied in the negative and then said that [redacted] at telephone number [redacted] contacted a woman at the above number who identified herself as [redacted] and she told him [redacted] Washington. She related that on the night of the hijacking in 1971, [redacted] was at work. During the time [redacted] she heard a low flying jet airplane. She mentioned this to [redacted] along an [redacted] had seen a well dressed man walking along the road and thought it strange to see such an individual in that area at that time of the night. [redacted] had not reported this to the authorities and she advised that [redacted] had not even heard about the hijacking for a period of [redacted] after it happened and had felt that law enforcement officers were so busy they would not be interested in this information. [redacted] said he attempted to get in touch with [redacted] report of the incident but had not been able to contact him.

The FBI told TJC's sleuths that one of the reasons it cleared Rackstraw was because his prints were not found on jet – but this was disinformation.

In an agency-approved Cooper file search by a 2010 author (with no redactions), a '71 agent's memo (below) revealed "no prints of value" were found in rear of plane. As seconded in Cooper's 5<sup>th</sup> taunting note to FBI, he "left no fingerprints."

The fingerprint lifts made during the search of the interior of the aircraft in the area where the hijacker was known to have been, such as the rear door, the area around the door, the lavatory door, as well as the seat area, susceptible to dusting, were submitted for fingerprint examination, but no fingerprints of value were found on any of the latents thus obtained.

FBI "302" IR by Reno Special Agent John F. Ricks on 11/25/71; Page 76

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I left no fingerprints  
I wore a toupee  
I wore putty make-up

NR017 WA PLAIN  
326PM URGENT 12-29-71 MRF  
TO SEATTLE (164-81)  
FROM DIRECTOR (164-2111)  
NORJAK

RE WASHINGTON FIELD AIRTEL TO BUREAU DECEMBER TWENTYEIGHT SEVENTYONE.

IT WAS DETERMINED THAT THE TYPEWRITING ON THE LETTER SIGNED [redacted] ADDRESSED TO THE AIR LINE PILOTS ASSOCIATION, WASHINGTON, D. C., HAS THE SAME STYLE OF TYPEWRITING AS THAT ON THE [redacted] TYPEWRITTEN LETTERS RECEIVED IN THIS CASE.

THE TYPEWRITING ON THE LETTER SIGNED [redacted] COULD NOT BE ADEQUATELY COMPARED WITH THE [redacted] LETTERS SINCE THE [redacted] LETTERS ARE CARBON COPIES AND THE ENVELOPES ACCOMPANYING THE [redacted] LETTERS CONTAIN ONLY A VERY LIMITED AMOUNT OF TYPEWRITING. THE SIGNATURE OF [redacted] COULD NOT BE ADEQUATELY COMPARED WITH THE QUESTIONED HANDWRITING ON ANY OF THE OTHER LETTERS IN THIS CASE, DUE TO A LACK OF COMPARABLE WRITING.

THE PRESENCE OF THE SAME STYLE OF TYPEWRITING AND CERTAIN LIMITED SIMILAR CHARACTERISTICS INDICATE THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE TYPEWRITER USED TO PREPARE THE LETTER SIGNED [redacted] WAS USED TO PREPARE THE TYPEWRITING ON THE [redacted] LETTERS.

SINCE THE MAJORITY OF THE QUESTIONED TYPEWRITING ON THE [redacted] LETTERS CONSISTS OF CARBON COPY IMPRESSIONS. FUTURE EXAMINATION MAY NOT RESULT IN AN IDENTIFICATION OF THE QUESTIONED WRITING.

**In an FOIA-released memo from the desk of J. Edgar Hoover, 2017 FBI agents inexplicably redact all of the "Cooper" headers in six Letter #5 references.**

# Getaway Pilot Comes Calling

Witness #1:

Date of transcription: 12/9/71

Washington, advised that sometime around the first of October, she was contacted on [redacted] by a person who identified himself as [redacted]. She stated that [redacted] is a skip name and that she does not know his true identity. She added that [redacted] made inquiries regarding the location of [redacted] in the general area of Washington. She stated that she gave [redacted] specific information concerning the location of [redacted] Washington. She added that [redacted] saw a small airplane circling low over the general area of [redacted] Washington, on November 24, 1971, and that he could provide a partial registration number which was on the wing of the airplane.

b6  
b7c

Witness #2:

Date of transcription: 12/9/71

Washington, stated that he and [redacted] during the afternoon hours of November 24, 1971, and that he observed a small low wing airplane, white in color, with a brownish blue strip running from the front of the plane to the rear bearing the prefix letters [redacted] and some number on the bottom of one wing, circling low over the general area of [redacted] Washington. He stated that the plane continued to fly over the area all afternoon and into the evening and that he last saw it around 8:00 PM.

b6  
b7c

He stated that after dark the plane turned on a greenish colored light in front and a red light on the tail. He stated that he paid close attention to the plane as he was [redacted]

b6  
b7c

He stated that he saw the same plane in the same general area about one month ago. He said it was a low wing model plane. He did not see the plane land.

Redacted: McClellan Ranch Grass Airstrip, Amboy, WA

Interviewed on 11/28/71 at [redacted] Washington File # SE 164-81-1872 b6  
by SA [redacted] bfr Date dictated 12/4/71 b7c

# Getaway Pilot Outfoxes FBI

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Date of transcription: 12/8/71

Vancouver, Washington, was interviewed at his place of employment, [redacted] Vancouver, Washington. He was advised of the identity of the interviewing Agents and was asked for information on the skip name, [redacted]. He admitted that when he is [redacted] and transmitting he does use the name [redacted] for identification though it is not a name approved by the Federal Communications Commission. He pointed out that a number of people use the skip names for identification.

[redacted] recalled that about one month ago he contacted [redacted] Washington and did ask her the location of [redacted] in that area since it was not on his map. This information was given to him and he probably used the name [redacted] at the time of contact.

He pointed out that he owns a [redacted] airplane which bears registration number [redacted] and is parked [redacted] Washington. This is a white plane with two colors of green strips running the length of the aircraft.

[redacted] was asked if he had been flying on November 24, 1971, particularly in [redacted] Washington and stated that he had not been flying for the headline of his plane is down and to fly in that condition would be extremely dangerous. He pointed out that his plane does have a large red light on the top of his tail assembly and further that he normally monitors [redacted]



on 12/2/71 at Vancouver, Washington File # SE 164-81-1872  
SA [redacted] d

**Above-Left:** In October 1971, a phone-caller using a "skip name" (nickname) asked a farmer's wife in remote Amboy, Washington, for the exact location of a nearby grass airstrip that wasn't on any maps. A month later, the FBI heard about that call, a small plane practicing touch-and-goes on the airstrip, and a briefcase-carrying man in a business suit who was spotted there one evening – walking out of the night woods. **Above-Right:** Two agents hunted down that skip-named caller and his well-described aircraft (with a partial tail number). But even with six matching case details (underlined items), the G-men accepted the pilot's flimsy alibi (At star). As one of those feds later contended in a book, aviators are "head and shoulders above the standards and values and the character of average Americans."

**FYI:** TJC found the alleged Getaway Pilot in 2017 and gave his location/contacts to FBI – but no new action was taken.

TO: DIRECTOR, FBI (164-2111)  
ATTN: FBI LABORATORY

FROM: SAC, LAS VEGAS 11/30/71

UNSUB;  
NORTHWEST AIRLINES FLIGHT 305,  
PORTLAND TO SEATTLE,  
11/24/71  
CAA - HIJACKING; EXTORTION



Enclosed herewith for the Bureau is the original letter and envelope forwarded to the "Reno Evening Gazette" at Reno, Nevada, postmarked Oakdale, California, 11/27/71.

Enclosed for the Bureau is one copy of the final edition (AAA) of the "Modesto Bee", 11/26/71.

Enclosed newspaper appears definitely to be the issue from which note mentioned in airtel as furnished to the FBI Laboratory was clipped. The location of words located are as follows:

- Page A-5, column 4-5, headline "Hospitality"
- Page B-11, column 4, "In a rut"
- Page D-12, column 6, "Attention"

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20535

TO: SAC, Las Vegas (164-60) DATE: December 7, 1971

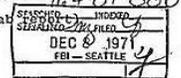
RE: UNSUB;  
NORTHWEST AIRLINES FLIGHT 305,  
PORTLAND TO SEATTLE,  
11/24/71  
CAA - HIJACKING; EXTORTION  
OO: Seattle

FBI File No. 164-2111  
Lab. No. D-711206032 LL

Bureau, dated 11/30/71, requesting photographs of Q1 and Q2 for CII, Sacramento. These photographs are enclosed for Sacramento and are to be delivered to [redacted] Supervisory Special Agent, CII, for comparison with the Zodiac case. The hand printing on Q1 is disguised and nothing of significance was noted in the comparison with the questioned hand printing in the case "Zodiac; Extortion, OO: Sacramento," Sacramento file 9-68, Bureau file 9-49911. No connection could be established by the Laboratory between Q1 and Q2 in captioned case and the Zodiac case.

- Enclosures (2) (2 Lab report)
- 2-Philadelphia (164-133) Enclosures (2) (2 Lab report)
- 2-Sacramento (164-50) Enclosures (5) (Photographs of Q1 and Q2, KI, 2 Lab report)
- 2-Seattle (164-81) Enclosures (2) (2 Lab report) 114-81-380
- 2-Portland Enclosures (2) (2 Lab report)
- 2-Minneapolis (164-73) Enclosures (2) (2 Lab report)

Zodiac Killer's pasted words/writing compared to DBC Letter #1 (Q1/Q2).



DB Cooper-3729

**Disinformation:** Case Agent Eng told TJC's team the taunting Cooper letters to FBI were "discounted long ago." But as these 2 memos on Letter #1 (and previous page's director memo) show, Hoover himself was after the writer. ##