

## FBI Terror-Effort Whistleblower Retires

**Fri Dec 31, 2004 11:10 PM ET**

MINNEAPOLIS - A career FBI ([news](#)

- [web sites](#)) agent who rocked official Washington with a blistering memo to the boss alleging bureau bungling before the Sept. 11 attacks retired from the agency Friday.



[AP Photo](#)

Coleen Rowley, who was named one of Time magazine's Persons of the Year for 2002 for her whistleblowing efforts, retired 11 days after turning 50, when she became eligible for a full pension, the Star Tribune reported.

Rowley, who worked for the FBI for 24 years, said she has no immediate plans, but wants to be considered for appointment to a new federal board that will ensure counterterrorism investigations and arrests do not infringe on people's rights. The law overhauling the nation's intelligence apparatus directs the Department of Homeland Security to create the Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board.

She did not immediately return a call left Friday night by The Associated Press.

Rowley was hailed by colleagues in Minneapolis in 2002 when she wrote a letter to FBI Director Robert Mueller accusing bureau headquarters of blowing a chance to unravel the Sept. 11, 2001, hijacking plot.

She charged that FBI supervisors in Washington blundered when they blocked requests from Minneapolis agents for a special warrant to search the possessions of terror suspect Zacarias Moussaoui, who had been learning to fly a 747 jumbo jet at a Minnesota flight school. Moussaoui is now the only figure facing U.S. trial in connection with the attacks.

"We have a culture in the FBI that there's a certain pecking order and it's pretty strong, and it's very rare that somebody picks up the phone and calls a rank or two above themselves," she said at a Senate Judiciary Committee ([news](#) - [web sites](#)) hearing in June 2002.

In early 2003, however, Rowley angered fellow agents by making public a letter she wrote urging Mueller to oppose a U.S. invasion of Iraq ([news](#) - [web sites](#)). Rowley argued that a war in Iraq could result in a "flood of terrorism" on a scale the bureau was not prepared to handle.

Rowley signed up for the FBI in 1980 after earning a law degree from the University of Iowa, becoming one of the few female FBI agents at the time. She worked on organized crime cases in New York City before transferring to Minneapolis.

There, she was the agency's public face, serving as spokeswoman for several years in the 1990s and through some major cases, including the high-profile hunt for killer Andrew Cunanan and the capture, in St. Paul, Minn., of Symbionese Liberation Army fugitive Sara Jane Olson.