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Title 28 – Judicial Administration

Chapter I – Department of Justice

Part 27 Whistleblower Protection for Federal Bureau of Investigation Employees

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PART 27—WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION FOR FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION EMPLOYEES

Authority: 5 U.S.C. 301, 3151; 28 U.S.C. 509, 510, 515–519; 5 U.S.C. 2303; President's Memorandum to the Attorney General, Delegation of Responsibilities Concerning FBI Employees Under the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978, 3 CFR p. 284 (1997).

Source: Order No. 2264–99, 64 FR 58786, Nov. 1, 1999, unless otherwise noted.

Subpart A—Protected Disclosures of Information

§ 27.1 Making a protected disclosure.

- (a) When an employee of, or applicant for employment with, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) (FBI employee) makes a disclosure of information to the Department of Justice's (Department's) Office of Professional Responsibility (OPR), the Department's Office of Inspector General (OIG), the FBI Office of Professional Responsibility (FBI OPR), the FBI Inspection Division (FBI–INSD) Internal Investigations Section (collectively, Receiving Offices), the Attorney General, the Deputy Attorney General, the Director of the FBI, the Deputy Director of the FBI, or to the highest ranking official in any FBI field office, the disclosure will be a “protected disclosure” if the person making it reasonably believes that it evidences:
- (1) A violation of any law, rule or regulation; or
 - (2) Mismanagement, a gross waste of funds, an abuse of authority, or a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety.

- (b) Any office or official (other than the OIG or OPR) receiving a protected disclosure shall promptly report such disclosure to the OIG or OPR for investigation. The OIG and OPR shall proceed in accordance with procedures establishing their respective jurisdiction. The OIG or OPR may refer such allegations to FBI-INSD Internal Investigations Section for investigation unless the Deputy Attorney General determines that such referral shall not be made.

[Order No. 2926–2008, 73 FR 1495, Jan. 9, 2008]

§ 27.2 Prohibition against reprisal for making a protected disclosure.

- (a) Any employee of the FBI, or of any other component of the Department, who has authority to take, direct others to take, recommend, or approve any personnel action shall not, with respect to such authority, take or fail to take, or threaten to take or fail to take, a personnel action, as defined below, with respect to any FBI employee as a reprisal for a protected disclosure.
- (b) Personnel action means any action described in clauses (i) through (xi) of 5 U.S.C. 2302(a)(2)(A) taken with respect to an FBI employee other than one in a position which the Attorney General has designated in advance of encumbrance as being a position of a confidential, policy-determining, policy-making, or policy-advocating character.

Subpart B—Investigating Reprisal Allegations and Ordering Corrective Action

§ 27.3 Investigations: The Department of Justice's Office of Professional Responsibility and Office of the Inspector General.

- (a)
 - (1) An FBI employee who believes that another employee of the FBI, or of any other Departmental component, has taken or has failed to take a personnel action as a reprisal for a protected disclosure (reprisal), may report the alleged reprisal to either the Department's OPR or the Department's OIG (collectively, Investigative Offices). The report of an alleged reprisal must be made in writing.
 - (2) For purposes of this subpart, references to the FBI include any other Departmental component in which the person or persons accused of the reprisal were employed at the time of the alleged reprisal.
- (b) The Investigative Office that receives the report of an alleged reprisal shall consult with the other Investigative Office to determine which office is more suited, under the circumstances, to conduct an investigation into the allegation. The Attorney General retains final authority to designate or redesignate the Investigative Office that will conduct an investigation.
- (c) Within 15 calendar days of the date the allegation of reprisal is first received by an Investigative Office, the office that will conduct the investigation (Conducting Office) shall provide written notice to the person who made the allegation (Complainant) indicating—
 - (1) That the allegation has been received; and
 - (2) The name of a person within the Conducting Office who will serve as a contact with the Complainant.
- (d) The Conducting Office shall investigate any allegation of reprisal to the extent necessary to determine whether there are reasonable grounds to believe that a reprisal has been or will be taken.

- (e) Within 90 calendar days of providing the notice required in paragraph (c) of this section, and at least every 60 calendar days thereafter (or at any other time if the Conducting Office deems appropriate), the Conducting Office shall notify the Complainant of the status of the investigation.
- (f) The Conducting Office shall determine whether there are reasonable grounds to believe that there has been or will be a reprisal for a protected disclosure. The Conducting Office shall make this determination within 240 calendar days of receiving the allegation of reprisal unless the Complainant agrees to an extension.
- (g) If the Conducting Office decides to terminate an investigation, it shall provide, no later than 10 business days before providing the written statement required by paragraph (h) of this section, a written status report to the Complainant containing the factual findings and conclusions justifying the termination of the investigation. The Complainant may submit written comments on such report to the Conducting Office. The Conducting Office shall not be required to provide a subsequent written status report after submission of such comments.
- (h) If the Conducting Office terminates an investigation, it shall prepare and transmit to the Complainant a written statement notifying him/her of—
 - (1) The termination of the investigation;
 - (2) A summary of relevant facts ascertained by the Conducting Office;
 - (3) The reasons for termination of the investigation; and
 - (4) A response to any comments submitted under paragraph (g) of this section.
- (i) Such written statement prepared pursuant to paragraph (h) of this section may not be admissible as evidence in any subsequent proceeding without the consent of the Complainant.
- (j) Nothing in this part shall prohibit the Receiving Offices, in the absence of a reprisal allegation by an FBI employee under this part, from conducting an investigation, under their pre-existing jurisdiction, to determine whether a reprisal has been or will be taken.

§ 27.4 Corrective action and other relief; Director, Office of Attorney Recruitment and Management.

- (a) If, in connection with any investigation, the Conducting Office determines that there are reasonable grounds to believe that a reprisal has been or will be taken, the Conducting Office shall report this conclusion, together with any findings and recommendations for corrective action, to the Director, Office of Attorney Recruitment and Management (the Director). If the Conducting Office's report to the Director includes a recommendation for corrective action, the Director shall provide an opportunity for comments on the report by the FBI and the Complainant. The Director, upon receipt of the Conducting Office's report, shall proceed in accordance with paragraph (e) of this section. A determination by the Conducting Office that there are reasonable grounds to believe a reprisal has been or will be taken shall not be cited or referred to in any proceeding under these regulations, without the Complainant's consent.
- (b) At any time, the Conducting Office may request the Director to order a stay of any personnel action for 45 calendar days if it determines that there are reasonable grounds to believe that a reprisal has been or is to be taken. The Director shall order such stay within three business days of receiving the request for stay, unless the Director determines that, under the facts and circumstances involved, such a stay would not be appropriate. The Director may extend the period of any stay granted under this paragraph for any period that the Director considers appropriate. The Director shall allow the FBI an opportunity to comment to the

Director on any proposed extension of a stay, and may request additional information as the Director deems necessary. The Director may terminate a stay at any time, except that no such termination shall occur until the Complainant and the Conducting Office shall first have had notice and an opportunity to comment.

(c)

(1) The Complainant may present a request for corrective action directly to the Director within 60 calendar days of receipt of notification of termination of an investigation by the Conducting Office or at any time after 120 calendar days from the date the Complainant first notified an Investigative Office of an alleged reprisal if the Complainant has not been notified by the Conducting Office that it will seek corrective action. The Director shall notify the FBI of the receipt of the request and allow the FBI 25 calendar days to respond in writing. If the Complainant presents a request for corrective action to the Director under this paragraph, the Conducting Office may continue to seek corrective action specific to the Complainant, including the submission of a report to the Director, only with the Complainant's consent. Notwithstanding the Complainant's refusal of such consent, the Conducting Office may continue to investigate any violation of law, rule, or regulation.

(2) The Director may not direct the Conducting Office to reinstate an investigation that the Conducting Office has terminated in accordance with § 27.3(h).

(d) Where a Complainant has presented a request for corrective action to the Director under paragraph (c) of this section, the Complainant may at any time request the Director to order a stay of any personnel action allegedly taken or to be taken in reprisal for a protected disclosure. The request for a stay must be in writing, and the FBI shall have an opportunity to respond. The request shall be granted within 10 business days of the receipt of any response by the FBI if the Director determines that such a stay would be appropriate. A stay granted under this paragraph shall remain in effect for such period as the Director deems appropriate. The Director may modify or dissolve a stay under this paragraph at any time if the Director determines that such a modification or dissolution is appropriate.

(e)

(1) The Director shall determine, based upon all the evidence, whether a protected disclosure was a contributing factor in a personnel action taken or to be taken. Subject to paragraph (e)(2) of this section, if the Director determines that a protected disclosure was a contributing factor in a personnel action taken or to be taken, the Director shall order corrective action as the Director deems appropriate. The Director may conclude that the disclosure was a contributing factor in the personnel action based upon circumstantial evidence, such as evidence that the employee taking the personnel action knew of the disclosure and that the personnel action occurred within a period of time such that a reasonable person could conclude that the disclosure was a contributing factor in the personnel action.

(2) Corrective action may not be ordered if the FBI demonstrates by clear and convincing evidence that it would have taken the same personnel action in the absence of such disclosure.

(3) In making the determinations required under this subsection, the Director may hold a hearing at which the Complainant may present evidence in support of his or her claim, in accordance with such procedures as the Director may adopt. The Director is hereby authorized to compel the attendance and testimony of, or the production of documentary or other evidence from, any person employed by the Department if doing so appears reasonably calculated to lead to the discovery of admissible evidence, is not otherwise prohibited by law or regulation, and is not unduly burdensome. Any privilege available in judicial and administrative proceedings relating to the disclosure of documents

or the giving of testimony shall be available before the Director. All assertions of such privileges shall be decided by the Director. The Director may, upon request, certify a ruling on an assertion of privilege for review by the Deputy Attorney General.

- (f) If the Director orders corrective action, such corrective action may include: placing the Complainant, as nearly as possible, in the position he would have been in had the reprisal not taken place; reimbursement for attorneys fees, reasonable costs, medical costs incurred, and travel expenses; back pay and related benefits; and any other reasonable and foreseeable consequential damages.
- (g) If the Director determines that there has not been a reprisal, the Director shall report this finding in writing to the complainant, the FBI, and the Conducting Office.

[Order No. 2264-99, 64 FR 58786, Nov. 1, 1999, as amended by Order No. 2492-2001, 66 FR 37904, July 20, 2001; Order No. 2926-2008, 73 FR 1495, Jan. 9, 2008]

§ 27.5 Review.

The Complainant or the FBI may request, within 30 calendar days of a final determination or corrective action order by the Director, review by the Deputy Attorney General of that determination or order. The Deputy Attorney General shall set aside or modify the Director's actions, findings, or conclusions found to be arbitrary, capricious, an abuse of discretion, or otherwise not in accordance with law; obtained without procedures required by law, rule, or regulation having been followed; or unsupported by substantial evidence. The Deputy Attorney General has full discretion to review and modify corrective action ordered by the Director, provided, however that if the Deputy Attorney General upholds a finding that there has been a reprisal, then the Deputy Attorney general shall order appropriate corrective action.

§ 27.6 Extensions of time.

The Director may extend, for extenuating circumstances, any of the time limits provided in these regulations relating to proceedings before him and to requests for review by the Deputy Attorney General.