

Supervisory Special Agent Donovan J. Leighton
Federal Bureau of Investigation
ITOS-2, ETIU 1 Middle East Team
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Supervisory Special Agent (SSA) Donovan Leighton currently serves as the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Program Manager for the Arabian Peninsula in the FBI's Counterterrorism Division based at the National Counterterrorism Center (CTD).

SSA Leighton obtained an early exposure to law enforcement in high school as a police cadet with the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) during a period of widespread civil unrest in 1968-1970. As an undergraduate and law student he served in a civilian capacity with the Berkeley and Oakland police Departments during the era of Black Panthers, Symbionese Liberation Army, Zebra murder series, and anti-Viet Nam student riots.

SSA Leighton graduated from the University of California, Berkeley in 1974 with a B.A. in Criminology and from Boalt Hall with a Juris Doctorate in 1977. He served as a deputy district attorney with the Alameda County District Attorney's Office for one year after passing the California Bar.

SSA Leighton entered on duty with the FBI on 10 July 1978. He was assigned to the Los Angeles Division from October, 1978 until June, 1990 where he worked fugitives, interstate transportation of stolen motor vehicles, counterterrorism, organized crime/drugs and white collar crime matters. As a street agent, he was instrumental in obtaining a solicitation of murder conviction of an Iranian émigré who sought to contract the murder of the widow of the late Shah of Iran. He also developed an informant who exposed a commercial burglary ring composed of Los Angeles police officers assigned to the Hollywood Division. As night supervisor he played a key role in the apprehension of three escaped prisoners from the New Mexico State Penitentiary. Promoted to Supervisory Special Agent in 1989, he took the initiative to collaborate with LAPD colleagues in the inception of the first FBI-LAPD gang task force. He drafted briefing materials for the United States Attorney General concerning the crime threat posed by South-Central Los Angeles street gangs which continue to be used in FBI training. SSA Leighton was also active as a FBI field legal instructor.

In 1990, SSA Leighton deployed to the Republic of Panama where he served as the Technical Assistance Manager of the International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program's project to stand-up a civilian police force subordinate to lawfully constituted authority following Operation Just Cause. Among his responsibilities was the development of offices of professional responsibilities in the Panamanian uniformed and investigative police to address internal misconduct. SSA Leighton worked closely with various Department of Defense (DOD) elements as well as the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

Following his return to the United States, SSA Leighton served in various supervisory capacities in FBI Headquarters (FBIHQ) including the Criminal Investigative Division, Inspection Staff, and Personnel Division where he administered the FBI's performance appraisal system.

From 1998 to 2001, SSA Leighton served as the FBI's legal attaché in Bridgetown, Barbados where he covered eight independent countries and several European overseas departments from the British Virgin Islands to Trinidad & Tobago. During this period, he maintained extensive liaison with the CIA as well as the Department of State (DOS).

Following his return to FBIHQ in 2001, SSA Leighton was assigned to the Office of International Operations (OIO) where at various times he served as program manager for Legal Attachés (Legats) Amman, Baghdad, Islamabad, Riyadh, Sanaa, Tel Aviv, Mexico City and New Delhi.

Immediately after the 11 September 2001 attacks, SSA Leighton took the initiative to fill a liaison gap between OIO and the CTD for which he was recognized with a substantial cash incentive award. SSA Leighton played a significant role in the FBI's decision to establish a legal attaché office in Algiers and Yemen and was instrumental in the establishment of a mini-National Academy delivered in Arabic for potential liaison partners representing various countries in the Middle East and North Africa. Since September 2001 SSA Leighton has engaged in several hundred hours of independent study concerning Al-Qa'ida and intelligence reform.

SSA Leighton has served in a Temporary Duty (TDY) capacity at Legats Manila, Panama City, Riyadh and Sanaa. While TDY to Legat Manila, he was instrumental in the unprecedented apprehension and rendition of four fugitives in 14 days resulting in a written commendation from the US Internal Revenue Service.

In 2005, SSA Leighton played a key role in standing up OIO's Africa Unit in which he developed extensive liaison with the Washington, D.C. - based African diplomatic community as well as DOS and CIA.

In 2007, SSA Leighton was assigned to CTD where he supervised four Intelligence Analysts covering counterterrorism investigations in Africa with oversight responsibility for two Fly Team Special Agents and drafted a comprehensive strategy for attacking terrorist activities in the greater Horn of Africa (Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Puntland, Somalia, and Yemen). SSA Leighton played a central role in the capture of the principal subject in the January 2008 murder in Khartoum, Sudan of USAID official John Michael Granville. SSA Leighton organized and represented the FBI in a classified activity in Iraq promoting joint United States government inter-agency counterterrorism operations and he currently serves as Program Manager for counterterrorism investigations in the Arabian Peninsula.

Throughout his 30 year career SSA Leighton has been a strong advocate of equal opportunity in the FBI and was a named plaintiff in the African-American FBI Special Agents class action which resulted in significant reforms.

Leighton is also active in the Maryland Wing of the Civil Air Patrol.

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