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**For Immediate Release
February 13, 2002**

**Washington D.C.
FBI National Press Office
(202) 324-3691**

FBI Director Robert S. Mueller met yesterday with key U.S. leaders of national Arab, Muslim, and Sikh organizations. The meeting, requested by the FBI Director, sought to build on earlier discussions of a number of issues -- ranging from vigilante attacks and other hate crimes to the value of the continuing assistance from the Arab, Muslim, and Sikh communities in the overall effort to provide greater security for all Americans.

Mueller said that a "better understanding and a productive exchange of ideas" came from the meeting, as well as a commitment to a continuing dialogue on those issues and others of concern to the affected groups.

"In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, the FBI, working closely with Justice Department and state and local law enforcement, moved to prepare for an expected backlash against Arab, Muslim, and Sikh Americans, as well as recent immigrants here," Mueller said. "We brought to bear the full strength of federal and state laws to prevent hate crimes and when they did occur, prosecute quickly and aggressively."

To date, the FBI has initiated 318 hate crime investigations involving Arab, Muslim, and Sikh American victims, with eight persons being charged federally thus far. Additionally, some 70 persons have been charged with state and local crimes in connection with those investigations. Mueller urged the community leaders to continue to report any hate crime or threat. He reiterated the FBI's commitment to aggressively investigate all credible violations of federal civil rights laws that fall under FBI jurisdiction. The leaders also emphasized the importance of public awareness of the investigations to better ensure the confidence of the Arab, Muslim, and Sikh communities in law enforcement.

Another concern expressed by the leaders was the importance of cultural sensitivity by law enforcement when interviewing or otherwise dealing with members of the Arab and Muslim communities. Mueller said that, while cultural sensitivity has been part of FBI's continuing education program, such training is being expanded to all Special Agents in response to broader post-9/11 FBI investigative jurisdiction in these communities. For example, a prominent Arab-American community leader recently spoke to FBI Civil Rights program supervisors at the FBI Academy in Quantico, Virginia.

Both the leaders and the FBI Director agreed that an FBI initiative to ensure regular contact between FBI field leaders and local leaders of the Arab and Muslim communities has been helpful and should continue. Since 9/11, there have been more than 500 meetings with more than 600 organizations and mosques across the country, as well as a continuing dialogue between FBI Headquarters civil rights program managers and the national Arab, Muslim, and Sikh leadership. These programs have contributed to a better understanding of law enforcement's counterterrorism mission by the communities, resulting in greater cooperation and support of law enforcement efforts to better ensure security for all Americans.

Other issues discussed at the meeting included the perception of racial profiling in international terrorism investigations and the status of alien detainees who remain in federal custody.

Attending the meeting was Dr. James Zogby, president of the Arab American Institute; George Salem, AAI Chairman; Dr. Ziad Asili, president, Arab-American Anti-Discrimination Committee; Manjit Singh, Executive Director of the Sikh Mediawatch and Resource Task Force, a Sikh advocacy group; Abdulwahab Alkebi, Executive Director, Islamic Institute; Dhjaleed Saffuri, President, Islamic Institute; Nihad Awad, Executive Director, Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR); Mr. Jason Erb, Director of Government Affairs for CAIR; Dr. Nedzi Sacirbey, acting director, American Muslim Council; and Dr. Hassan Ibrahim, national director of the Muslim Public Affairs Council.

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