



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on March 29, 2018

Journalist Captured by Al-Qaeda in Syria Says FBI Prioritized Intelligence Gathering Over His Rescue

Matt Schrier, an American photojournalist who was kidnapped in Syria in December 2012 by the Jabhat al-Nusra Front — the al-Qaeda affiliate in Syria — and who was tortured for seven months before escaping in July 2013, said on Fox News's *The Story* with Martha MacCallum on March 27 that he is extremely upset over the FBI's handling of his case. He accused the bureau of misleading his family and, under the leadership of former FBI Director Robert Mueller, putting intelligence-gathering ahead of his personal security. He said the bureau tracked computers and tablets that his terrorist kidnappers bought using his credit cards, after they tortured him to obtain his passwords.



Schrier maintains that even though it should have been obvious to the bureau that al-Nusra had stolen his identity, the FBI was more interested in using the information from the online accounts to monitor the terrorists than to locate and rescue him.

Schrier told MacCallum during the interview that he knew “beyond a reasonable doubt” that the FBI was monitoring his finances. He said:

And this is because the agent told me she thought I joined Al Qaeda because they paid off my Discover card. That's what it takes to fool the FBI. So, because they thought I joined, and I was basically judged guilty until proven innocent, they started monitoring everything and they saw they were buying laptops, ten at once, tablets on eBay. And, you gotta think, this is a dream come true. We intercept the laptops, we get the IP addresses, maybe put some GPS's, some microphones in and we deliver them right into the hands of Al Qaeda. And they spy. And me, well I'm not coming home anyway so no harm, no foul. As long as you're not me.

The Canadian-based *Global News* reported on March 29 that Schrier believes the FBI was likely letting the jihadists “steal my money so that they could then intercept the laptops and tablets before delivering them directly into the hands of al-Qaida, creating the intelligence community's wet dream for infiltrating the enemy.”

“So in reality, the FBI wasn't conducting an investigation; they were conducting an operation. [FBI Special Agent] Brody and her colleagues used me as chum, to bring the sharks to the surface.”

The *Global News* report focused on a unique Canadian aspect of Schrier's ordeal, saying that a month after his kidnapping, he was brought before three jihadists who wanted his online passwords. He said they wore masks but he recognized their Quebec accents.



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His credit cards were subsequently used to make \$17,000 worth of purchases, including the computers that the FBI later monitored.

Schrier learned from his credit card records that some of the items were delivered to an address in Montreal. He believes one of the suspects bought the goods using his real name.

"That terrorist has since moved back to Canada where he lives a free man, having never been arrested or punished in any way for his role in the crimes committed against me," Schrier wrote in his book, *The Dawn Prayer, or How to Survive in a Secret Syrian Terrorist Prison: A Memoir*.

Schrier reported these details to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), who told *Global News* that the matter was still under investigation. "So there's nothing we can really share on it yet," said Camille Habel, an RCMP spokesperson in Montreal. "It's an active investigation."

The RCMP executed search warrants at the homes of six Quebecers in 2015 in relation to the investigation, *Global News* stated, citing a report from the Montreal-based newspaper *La Presse*. The warrant applications accused them of fraud, extortion, and kidnapping.

National security investigators brought Schrier to Montreal and played him a wiretap of one of the suspects admitting he did it, Schrier told *Global News* in an interview.

The evidence collected by the RCMP also includes devices seized from the suspects' homes that were purchased with Schrier's credit cards, e-mails, text messages, a positive photo identification of a suspect, and a credible witness in Schrier.

Asked if he was frustrated at the RCMP over the lack of charges, he said: "No, I was frustrated because it took them so long but I do believe they did their jobs well enough to convict these people and the Crown will not move forward."

The FBI said its investigation remained open. "We continue to work with our inter-agency and international law enforcement partners to gather intelligence and assess the possibility of bringing charges against those who victimized Mr. Schrier," a bureau spokesperson told *Global News*.

However, during his interview with Martha MacCallum, Schrier was obviously disenchanted with the treatment he received from the FBI, even after now-former director James Comey took over from Robert Mueller. "I wrote James Comey, emails, no response," said Schrier; "sent him a message on Facebook and he blocked me. It's — it's absurd to think they didn't know. They had to know."

He told MacCallum earlier in the program: "At first, I thought it was incompetence, but the more I dug, the larger the pattern became until obviously it was not coincidence, coincidence, coincidence. I found emails from the FBI trying to convince my mother I was OK. Six months in, I found records of them buying laptops and tablets."

Following Schrier's interview, the FBI released a statement that said:

When an American is detained illegally overseas, the FBI's top priority is ensuring the safe return of that individual.

To that end the FBI provides support services to victims and their families, to include help in meeting short-term exigent needs, and shares information about their loved ones that is timely and appropriate.

However, Schrier's father, Jeffrey, told McClatchy News service another story: "The next time the FBI calls me will be the first time," said the elder Schrier, speaking to McClatchy near Fort Lauderdale,



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Florida. "I thank God my son was able to escape, because if he was waiting for the government to spring him he would still be waiting in that hellhole."

Image of Matt Schrier: Screenshot of [TEDx Talk on YouTube](#)

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