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# 'They treat a whistle-blower like a virus'

Updated 11/24/2006 12:18 AM ET

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## WHISTLE-BLOWERS TELL TALES

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Most people first heard about Russell Tice last December when the former National Security Agency intelligence analyst asked to testify before Congress about NSA programs he claims are illegal.

But his confrontation with his employer began much earlier. In 2001, Tice reported suspicions that an employee of the Defense Intelligence Agency, which oversees the NSA and other intelligence-gathering agencies, was spying for China.

When he followed up on the allegations several years later, Tice was ordered to undergo a psychological evaluation. Although he had passed his regular exam nine months earlier, the in-house psychologist conducting the latest evaluation decided Tice had psychotic paranoia.

After almost 20 years in intelligence, Tice's security clearance was revoked. He was transferred to a maintenance position at the NSA vehicle pool, and then to a government furniture warehouse.

Just days after publicly urging Congress to pass stronger protections for federal intelligence agency whistle-blowers facing retaliation, he was fired in May 2005.

"They treat a whistle-blower like a virus which they basically surround with buffers in an attempt to marginalize, isolate and prevent from having an impact on an organization," says Tice's lawyer, Joshua Dratel. Tice, through his lawyer, declined a request for an interview.

On July 25, Tice received a subpoena to "testify and answer questions concerning possible violations of federal criminal law" before a federal grand jury. The subpoena did not indicate whether he was the target of the investigation or whether it involved disclosures he made for a *New York Times* story on a NSA wiretapping program. Tice has acknowledged that he was the source for the *Times* piece in a January interview with ABC News and in press releases issued by the National Security whistle-blowers Coalition.

NSA spokesperson Don Weber declined to comment on Tice's allegations. "The National Security Agency upholds the highest standards of integrity in its handling of allegations of unlawful or inappropriate practices, and respects fully the requirements of the formal process by which such allegations are investigated," Weber wrote in an e-mail.

By Catherine Rampell with wire reports

Posted 11/23/2006 8:53 PM ET

Updated 11/24/2006 12:18 AM ET

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