

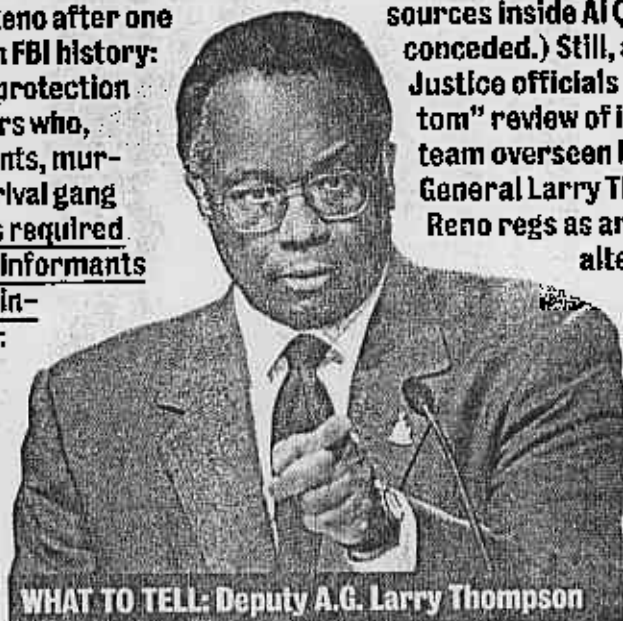
FBI RULES FOR INFORMANTS

Hoping to make it easier for the FBI to infiltrate terrorist groups, the Justice Department is drafting new rules giving field agents more leeway in how they deal with confidential informants, NEWSWEEK has learned. The new regs could be controversial. They ease up on tight restrictions imposed by former attorney general Janet Reno after one of the biggest scandals in FBI history: the Boston field office's protection of two notorious mobsters who, while serving as informants, murdered nearly two dozen rival gang members. The Reno regs required agents to read potential informants "verbatim" a long list of instructions. Among them: the FBI "cannot promise or guarantee" your anonymity in court and "you have no immunity or protection" from getting prosecuted for illegal conduct. As

soon as the regs went into effect early last year, officials claim, dozens of FBI informants got cold feet, causing valuable intelligence to dry up. Although FBI officials say a few of the lost informants were inside terrorist groups, there's no evidence any could have helped prevent the 9-11 attack. ("I'm not aware we had any sources inside Al Qaeda," one official conceded.) Still, after September 11, Justice officials ordered a "top to bottom" review of internal policies. A team overseen by Deputy Attorney General Larry Thompson identified the Reno regs as among the first items to alter. Thompson wanted

agents to have more "flexibility." The new rules, drafted by his staff, would let agents decide what they should—and should not—tell informants.

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WHAT TO TELL: Deputy A.G. Larry Thompson