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## An Antiwar Forum in Iowa Brings Federal Subpoenas

By MONICA DAVEY

**D**ES MOINES, Feb. 9 — To hear the antiwar protesters describe it, their forum at a local university last fall was like so many others they had held over the years. They talked about the nonviolent philosophies of Mahatma Gandhi and the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., they said, and how best to convey their feelings about Iraq into acts of civil disobedience.

But last week, subpoenas began arriving seeking details about the forum's sponsor — its leadership list, its annual reports, its office location — and the event itself. On Monday, lawyers for the sponsor, the Drake University chapter of the National Lawyers Guild, went to court in an effort to block the federal prosecutors' demands.

Those who attended the forum, at least four of whom said they had received subpoenas to appear before a federal grand jury on Tuesday, said that they did not know what to make of the inquiry and that they feared it was intended to quash protest.

Late on Monday, prosecutors in the United States attorney's office for the southern district of Iowa took the unusual step of issuing a confirmation of the investigation, stressing that its scope was limited to learning more about one person who had tried to scale a security fence at an Iowa National Guard base in a protest a day after the forum.

"The United States attorney's office does not prosecute persons peacefully and lawfully engaged in rallies which are conducted under the protection of the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States," a written statement issued by the prosecutor here, Stephen Patrick O'Meara, said.

Prosecutors also delayed the grand jury appearances by a month, a move local civil liberties officials interpreted as a sign that the government might be backing away from the investigation.

"I'd say the prosecutors are recognizing the groundswell of reaction that has happened in the face of this extraordinary thing they've done," said R. Ben Stone, executive director of the Iowa Civil Liberties Union.

Still, the protesters, their lawyers and some national civil liberties advocates described the investigation

into the attendance rolls and leadership lists of the lawyers' group as highly unusual in recent years. Some said it could send a chilling message far beyond Iowa, leaving those who consider voicing disapproval of the administration's policy in Iraq, or anywhere else, wondering whether they too might receive added scrutiny.

"I've heard of such a thing, but not since the 1950's, the McCarthy era," said David D. Cole, a Georgetown law professor. "It sends a very troubling message about government officials' attitudes toward basic liberties."

Anthony Romero, the executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union, said he feared news of the subpoenas — which was spreading rapidly via e-mail on Monday among activist organizations — might discourage people from showing up to protests, attending meetings at universities or even checking out library books.

"People will have to be asking themselves: will this be subject to government scrutiny?" Mr. Romero said.

Brian Terrell, the executive director of the Catholic Peace Ministry here, received a grand jury subpoena last week, he said. Mr. Terrell said he had helped conduct "nonviolence training" at the Nov. 15 forum on the Drake campus, which was titled "Stop the Occupation! Bring the Iowa Guard Home!" and attended by 21 people.

Mr. Terrell, 47, said he had been involved in and sometimes arrested for protests of United States actions related to Honduras; Vieques, Puerto Rico; and elsewhere over many years. He said he offered advice for people who chose to be arrested about how best to carry out their protests, like how to deal with police, how to deal with hecklers and how to react to jail.

At the forum, Mr. Terrell said, at least one local television station filmed the events, which were open to the public. Organizers had also mailed a leaflet about the events to a sergeant in the Des Moines police in case he wanted to come.

"Everything we did was completely in the open," Mr. Terrell said. "We've been doing this sort of thing a long time. The police know the routine. We know them. Usually things here in Iowa are very friendly."

The day after the forum, some in the group traveled to an Iowa National Guard base in Johnston, north of Des Moines, where they staged a demonstration, which Mr. Terrell described as routine. A dozen people were arrested there, mainly on state charges of trespass. At least one woman was also charged with assault. Mr. Terrell said he did not know of anyone trying to scale the fence at the base, but the federal authorities say someone did.

Mr. O'Meara, the prosecutor, said in his statement, "The narrow purpose and scope of that inquiry has been narrowed to determine whether there were any violations of federal law, or prior agreements to

violate federal law, regarding unlawful entry onto military property — and specifically to include whether there were any violations as a result of an alleged attempt to enter within the fenced, secure perimeter at Camp Dodge."

Officials at Drake University, a private institution of 5,100 students, declined to comment on Monday. Lisa Lacher, a spokeswoman for the school, said the court had made Drake, which received a broad subpoena in the case, subject "to a nondisclosure order" about the matter. "I'm afraid then that there's not much we can say," Ms. Lacher said.

The school's subpoena called for detailed information on the lawyers guild and its members, including the names of those who are officers, and guild meeting agendas and annual reports since 2002.

The subpoena also focused on the Nov. 15 antiwar forum, asking for "all requests for use of a room, all documents indicating the purpose and intended participants in the meeting, and all documents or recordings which would identify persons that actually attended the meeting."

Wendy Vasquez, 52, a clerical worker in Des Moines, also received a subpoena last week. Ms. Vasquez was one of those arrested outside the National Guard base the day after the forum at Drake. She said that in the past, she had been arrested for protesting the war in El Salvador and advocating for homeless people.

But this investigation, she said, appeared to be different.

"It was just another very mellow Iowa protest, so it's hard to know what this is all about," Ms. Vasquez said. "I guess it's meant to terrify the peace movement. I don't see what else they could be doing."