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## Rehab company sues state, federal agencies over a raid

By Eli Wolfe  
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Several state and federal agencies are in the crosshairs of a highly unusual complaint filed by Greenberg Gross LLP, which has accused 10 unnamed agents of brutalizing patients during a raid on multiple medical treatment centers earlier this year.

The unnamed agents allegedly shouted obscenities and physically harmed several patients and staff during a June 13 raid on several facilities operated by Sovereign Health of California, a company that runs treatment centers for drug addiction and mental health disorders. *Williams et al. v. Ten Unknown Agents*, 17-CV02002 (C.D. Cal., filed Oct. 2, 2017).

The complaint accused agents of illegally obtaining materials from the office of Sovereign's legal counsel, who was also allegedly prevented from monitoring the search or providing legal counsel to employees while they were being questioned by agents.

One agent allegedly admitted to a witness that the raid was meant to "send a message" to Sovereign and its CEO, Dr. Tonmoy Sharma, and other substance abuse treat-

ment providers.

Complaints challenging government agents' uses of force in a raid and the legality of search warrants are very rare, especially so soon after the raid occurred, according to attorneys with experience in health care enforcement.

The plaintiffs' legal counsel Joshua M. Robbins said the complaint is a necessary step in demanding accountability from the FBI, the California Department of Health Care Services, and other agencies that he said displayed unwarranted aggression during the raid.

"It was unnecessarily inappropriate and dangerous," Robbins said. He hinted that the raid could have resulted in catastrophe given that several facilities housed patients with severe mental disorders, including schizophrenia.

"What could go wrong when you send a bunch of armed agents into a place with mental health patients?" Robbins asked sarcastically.

A representative with the FBI was unable to comment on the pending litigation but confirmed an investigation of Sovereign is ongoing.

Robbins said this aggressive posturing actually preceded the

raid by several months. The complaint cited an incident on Jan. 10 when an openly armed DHCS investigator named Jason Grumet entered a Sovereign facility in San Diego and demanded to speak with certain employees while refusing to identify himself.

Sovereign filed a formal complaint against Grumet with the DHCS, which conducted an internal investigation of the incident, according to the complaint.

Greenberg Gross provided photos taken of two business cards belonging to DHCS employees who were allegedly present during the June 13 raids. One of the business cards appears to belong to Grumet. The complaint also accused DHCS personnel of giving patients brochures listing facilities operated by Sovereign's competitors, including several that were allegedly unlicensed.

Grumet did not respond to a request for comment. A representative from DHCS could not comment on record about the suit or the raid.

Search warrants signed a day prior to the raid indicated agents were looking for potential evidence of fraud and money laundering. But the probable cause for the raid and information about

the underlying investigation have been kept hidden in a sealed affidavit, according to the complaint.

The government convinced a court to seal the affidavit because the Sovereign investigation is still in its "infancy" and could be jeopardized by the disclosure of how probable cause was established, the complaint adds.

This is troubling to Robbins, who suggested the government's affidavit may have been based on information provided by a health insurance company called Health Net that is engaged in litigation with Sovereign, which, if true, could potentially undermine the credibility of the affidavit.

Health Net is also the subject of an unrelated investigation by the Department of Justice, according to the complaint. The company countersued Sovereign earlier this year for alleged acts of fraud.

Robbins also claimed the government did not deny that Health Net provided information for the affidavit during a hearing last month in which Sovereign unsuccessfully tried to unseal the document.

A spokesperson for the U.S. attorney's office said in an email the agency could not comment on ongoing cases.