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## **Fighting With Homeland Security**

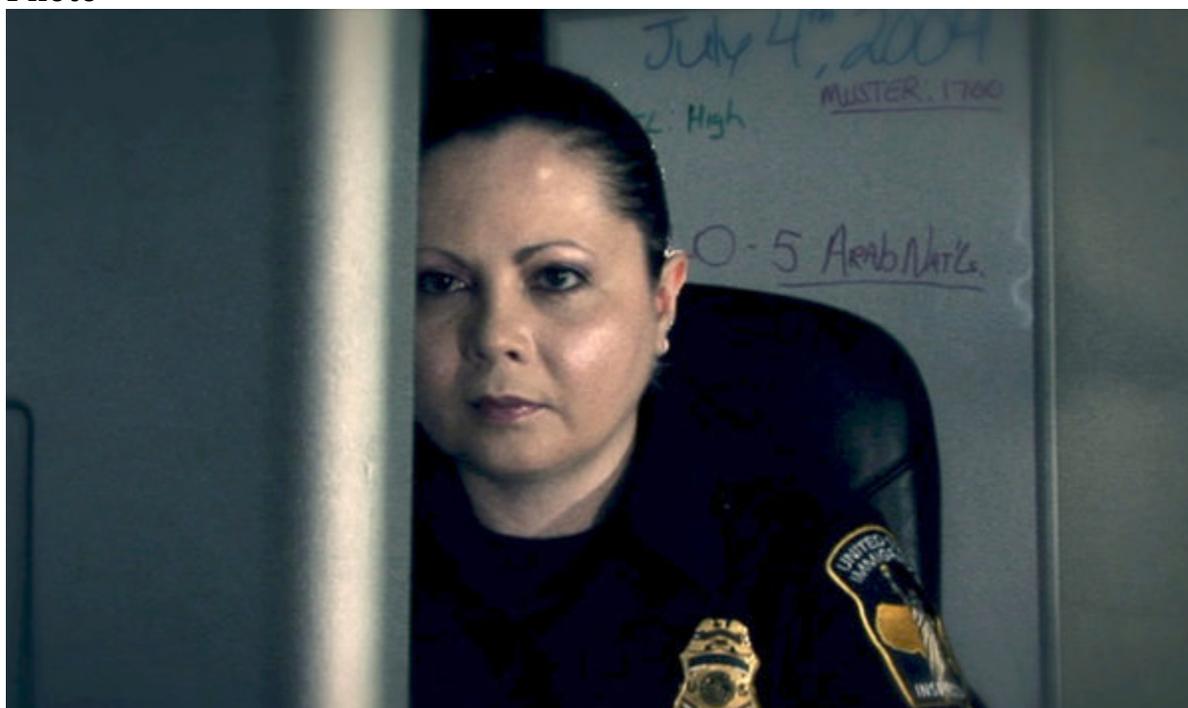
### **'Top Priority' Focuses on Julia Davis**

By JEANNETTE CATSOULIS JUNE 28, 2012

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Julia Davis in "Top Priority: The Terror Within." Credit 2012 Fleur De Lis Film Studios

If the astonishing events laid out in ["Top Priority: The Terror Within"](#) are to be understood at all, they will require a more coolheaded documentary than this one. Detailing the lengthy and convoluted conflict between [Julia Davis](#), a former Customs and Border Protection officer, and the Homeland Security Department, this screeching exposé from Asif Akbar serves neither the viewer nor its embattled subject.

When Ms. Davis reported security concerns to the F.B.I. from her post at the

Mexican border in July 2004, she was inexplicably labeled a “domestic terrorist” by Homeland Security and, the film claims, subjected to a jaw-dropping campaign of government harassment and intimidation. Official attempts to discredit her and her husband, the filmmaker [B J Davis](#), would raise questions about the deaths of four people (including the actress [Brittany Murphy](#)) and eventually involve multiple agencies and tactics, most shockingly a daylight raid on the Davises’ California home by armed operatives in a Black Hawk helicopter.

But from the opening montage of conspiracy-theorists’ greatest hits to a cheesy, duck-and-cover score, Mr. Akbar refuses to allow the facts to speak for themselves. Having compiled an impressive hoard of corroborating visual and audio evidence — anchored by taped legal depositions from two creepy government suits — he obscures it behind swooshing paramilitary graphics and hyperbolic narration. Staged shots of the Davises stiffly reciting high-anxiety twaddle (“Julia and I stood in the shadow of a Goliath”) alternate with preachy, patriotic homilies and quotes from [Lord Acton](#) and [Martin Niemöller](#). The upshot is a dense, chaotic film that reaches too far and speaks much too loudly.

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