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Updates for December 10th

21 Nov - The FBI Spends a Lot of Time Spying on Black Americans

The FBI has come under intense criticism after a 2017 leak exposed that its counterterrorism division had invented a new, unfounded domestic terrorism category it called “black identity extremism.”

MORE:

by Alice Spéri (*The Intercept*)

Since then, legislators have pressured the bureau’s leadership to be more transparent about its investigation of black activists, and a number of civil rights groups have filed public records requests to try to better understand who exactly the FBI is investigating under that designation. Although the bureau has released hundreds of pages of documents, it continues to shield the vast majority of these records from public scrutiny.

The sheer volume of documents those surveillance efforts have produced is troublesome, advocates say. The latest batch of FBI documents — obtained by the American Civil Liberties Union and the racial justice group MediaJustice and shared with *The Intercept* — reveals that between 2015 and 2018, the FBI dedicated considerable time and resources to opening a series of “assessments” into the activities of individuals and groups it mostly labeled “black separatist extremists.” This designation was eventually folded into the category of “black identity extremism.” Earlier this year, following an onslaught of criticism from elected officials, civil liberties advocates, and even some law enforcement groups, the FBI claimed that it had abandoned the “black identity extremism” label, substituting it for a “racially motivated violent extremism.” Critics say that this designation conveniently obscures the fact that black supremacist violence, unlike white supremacist violence, does not actually exist.

Although the FBI has frequently changed its labels and terminology, the surveillance of black Americans has continued. As *The Intercept* has reported, following the killing of Michael Brown by a police officer in Ferguson, Missouri, the FBI began spying on Ferguson activists and tracking their movements across states, warning local law enforcement partners that Islamic State group supporters were “urging” protesters to join their ranks. The FBI also drafted a mysterious “race paper,” the contents of which remain secret even though the bureau has disowned it. And as the Young Turks reported, the bureau has established a program dubbed “Iron Fist” targeting so-called black identity extremists with undercover agents.

The latest documents were turned over to the ACLU and MediaJustice after the groups sued the FBI last March over its failure to comply with a public records request. While the bureau is expected to release more documents in the coming months, what it has turned over so far is so heavily redacted that it is largely incomprehensible. In addition to removing entire paragraphs and all geographical and other identifiers from the documents, the FBI simply withheld hundreds of pages in full.

“These documents suggest that since at least 2016, the FBI was engaged in a national intelligence collection effort to manufacture a so-called ‘Black Identity Extremist’ threat,” Nusrat Choudhury, deputy director of the ACLU Racial Justice Program, told *The Intercept*. “They are spending a lot of energy on this and they are clearly reaching out to other law enforcement.”

“We are troubled about the fact that so much information is not being made available to the public,” she added. “We just know that the government is likely redacting information that should be disclosed to the public — it frequently does.”

A bureau spokesperson wrote to *The Intercept* in a statement that “every activity that the FBI conducts must uphold the Constitution and be carried out in accordance with federal laws.”

“Investigative activity may not be based solely on the exercise of rights guaranteed by the First Amendment,” the spokesperson added. “The FBI’s investigative methods are subject to multiple layers of oversight, and we ensure that our personnel are trained on privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties.”

Baseless Assessments

Most of the newly released documents are investigative files that show the FBI has opened a number of what bureau guidelines refer to as “assessments,” primarily into the activities of individuals it calls “black separatist extremists.” Assessments differ from full-blown investigations — or “predicated investigations,” in the bureau’s lingo — because they do not need to be predicated on a factual basis. That means the bureau needs no evidence of criminality or a national security threat in order to open an assessment. Assessments need only to be authorized for a specific purpose, such as recruiting new informants.

As a new report by the civil liberties group Defending Rights & Dissent notes, when choosing targets for an assessment, agents are allowed to use ethnicity, religion, or speech protected by the First Amendment as a factor, “as long as it is not the only one.” As the report notes, “Even though the standards for opening an assessment are extraordinarily low, the FBI is allowed to use extremely intrusive investigative techniques in performing them, including physical surveillance, use of informants, and pretextual interviews.”

During pretextual interviews, FBI agents are not required to disclose their status as federal officials and can lie about the purpose of the interview in order to elicit incriminating statements. Agents can open an assessment without a supervisor’s approval for a period of 30 days, after which a supervisor must sign off on an extension. After 90 days, an assessment must be reauthorized. Assessments can be reauthorized an unlimited number of times, which means that the FBI can surveil law-abiding citizens posing no national security threat for years.

Many of the new documents obtained by the ACLU and MediaJustice suggest that the FBI repeatedly reauthorized assessments beyond their initial duration periods. Because of the heavy redactions, however, it is not clear whether the bureau has opened many different assessments or whether the same handful of assessments have been extended multiple times. While some of the assessments refer to a particular geographic “area of responsibility,” others do not include such a designation, suggesting that they may refer to nationwide assessments of certain groups or organizations.

The reauthorization requests released by the FBI include a series of questions about the objective of the assessment, whether it was fulfilled, and any investigative techniques deployed. Because the answers are fully redacted, however, it’s impossible to tell whether the assessments had plausible justifications. It’s also unclear whether any robust review led to each reauthorization or whether supervisors merely rubber-stamped extension requests, Choudhury said. “Unfortunately they’re just redacting the parts of these that would give us an objective check on how they’re making decisions.”

Working With Police

In addition to paperwork relating to its multiple assessments, the new documents include reports of “liaisons” with organizations outside of the FBI and electronic communications suggesting active FBI collaboration with other law enforcement agencies. The bureau’s memos refer to a number of “strategy meetings” involving local law enforcement, including in the days before the first anniversary of Brown’s

killing in Ferguson, which reignited protests. In another exchange, law enforcement partners were asked to contribute to “collecting better intelligence on possible Black Separatist Extremists.”

The documents also refer to the FBI’s work with “Joint Terrorism Task Forces,” which bring together agents with officers from hundreds of state, local, and federal law enforcement agencies. Because JTTFs are run by the FBI, they operate under FBI guidelines, which provide fewer protections for speech, privacy, and civil liberties than the rules governing local police and other law enforcement.

But while federal and other law enforcement cooperation is routine, involving local police in vague and sweeping political surveillance efforts is deeply problematic, critics say. In fact, threat assessment reports such as the one on “black identity extremism” pose a particular challenge to local law enforcement, said Mike German, a former FBI agent and vocal critic of the bureau.

“What is it telling law enforcement officers to do?” German told *The Intercept*. “Most of [these assessments] just say, ‘Be very afraid of this new threat,’ and they don’t give any practical advice for how to identify that threat, or how to distinguish that threat from legitimate protest, or nonviolent civil disobedience, or other First Amendment-protected activity that might promote some similar ideas, but isn’t violence. So then the solution for these police departments that receive it is to treat all of them as if they are potential threats.”

To activists already concerned with police violence and a lack of accountability, police collaboration with the FBI’s surveillance efforts is particularly troubling.

“This is happening at the same time when jurisdictions across the country, our police departments, are actively acquiring surveillance tools in really secretive ways, without any sort of oversight and regulation,” said Myaisha Hayes, an organizer with MediaJustice, in an interview. “And it makes me worry that those tools can be used against activists given the sort of environment that the FBI is creating around criminalizing dissent.”

Throughout the documents, the FBI repeats boilerplate warnings that some “indicators” of domestic terrorism “may constitute the exercise of rights guaranteed by the First Amendment” and reminds agents that “the FBI is prohibited from engaging in investigative activity for the sole purpose of monitoring the exercise of First Amendment rights.”

Even so, the documents suggest that the bureau did in fact target protected speech as part of its surveillance activities, at some point monitoring the October 2015 “Million Man March” in Washington, D.C. While most of the memo concerning the march is redacted, the document does refer to the “violent rhetoric and nature” of the event — even though the march was in fact a nonviolent demonstration that drew tens of thousands to the capital to commemorate the original 1995 event and protest a series of high-profile police killings of black men.

While the FBI has a long history of targeting black Americans — most notably when it infiltrated and sought to disrupt the civil rights movement as part of its COINTELPRO political policing campaign — the bureau has in recent years shifted its target from those espousing “separatist” views to the much larger group of those protesting police violence. As *The Intercept* has reported, in an internal email exchange obtained by the government transparency group Property of the People, Michael F. Paul, an official with the FBI’s Counterterrorism Division, wrote to colleagues that the bureau had updated its definition of “black separatist extremism” in order “to broaden it beyond simply those seeking ‘separatism.’” Paul added: “The threat or movement has simply evolved, and many are seeking more than/other than separation.”

In fact, what those in the targeted “movement” say they are seeking is simply an end to police violence, as well as greater justice and government accountability.

“The Black Lives Matter movement, black-led organizations that are focused around policing and police brutality have not had a single incident of violence associated with their activist work,” Hayes told *The Intercept*. “That tells me that what the FBI is looking for is opportunities to basically disrupt organizing that challenges and threatens the status quo.”

23 Nov - Leonard Peltier's 2019 Thanksgiving Message: "Walking on Stolen Land"

Leonard Peltier, Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians, is incarcerated at the U.S. Penitentiary in Coleman, Florida, for his 1977 conviction in connection with a shootout with U.S. government forces, where two FBI agents and one young American Indian lost their lives.

MORE:

by Levi Rickert (*Native News Online*)

Peltier, who is considered a political prisoner of war by many, released this statement on Thanksgiving through the Leonard Peltier Defense Committee:

The year of 2019 is coming to a close and with it, comes the day most Americans set aside as a day for Thanksgiving. As I let my mind wander beyond the steel bars and concrete walls, I try to imagine what the people who live outside the prison gates are doing, and what they are thinking. Do they ever think of the Indigenous people who were forced from their homelands? Do they understand that with every step they take, no matter the direction, that they are walking on stolen land? Can they imagine, even for one minute, what it was like to watch the suffering of the women, the children and babies and yes, the sick and elderly, as they were made to keep pushing west in freezing temperatures, with little or no food? These were my people and this was our land. There was a time when we enjoyed freedom and were able to hunt buffalo and gather the foods and sacred medicines. We were able to fish and we enjoyed the clean clear water! My people were generous, we shared everything we had, including the knowledge of how to survive the long harsh winters or the hot humid summers. We were appreciative of the gifts from our Creator and remembered to give thanks on a daily basis. We had ceremonies and special dances that were a celebration of life.

With the coming of foreigners to our shores, life as we knew it would change drastically. Individual ownership was foreign to my people. Fences?? Unheard of, back then. We were a communal people and we took care of each other. Our grandparents weren't isolated from us! They were the wisdom keepers and story tellers and were an important link in our families. The babies? They were and are our future! Look at the brilliant young people who put themselves at risk, fighting to keep our water and environment clean and safe for the generations yet to come. They are willing to confront the giant, multi-national corporations by educating the general public of the devastation being caused. I smile with hope when I think of them. They are fearless and ready to speak the truth to all who are willing to listen. We also remember our brothers and sisters of Bolivia, who are rioting, in support of the first Indigenous President, Evo Morales. His commitment to the people, the land, their resources and protection against corruption is commendable. We recognize and identify with that struggle so well.

So today, I thank all of the people who are willing to have an open mind, those who are willing to accept the responsibility of planning for seven generations ahead, those who remember the sacrifices made by our ancestors so we can continue to speak our own language, practice our own way of thankfulness in our own skin, and that we always acknowledge and respect the Indigenous lineage that we carry.

For those of you who are thankful that you have enough food to feed your families, please give to those who aren't as fortunate. If you are warm and have a comfortable shelter to live in, please give to those who are cold and homeless, if you see someone hurting and in need of a kind word or two, be that person who steps forward and lends a hand. And especially, when you see injustice anywhere, please be brave enough to speak up to confront it.

I want to thank all who are kind enough to remember me and my family in your thoughts and prayers. Thank you for continuing to support and believe in me. There isn't a minute in any day that passes without me hoping that this will be the day I will be granted freedom. I long for the day when I can smell clean fresh air, when I can feel a gentle breeze in my hair, witness the clouds as their movement hides the sun and when the moon shines the light on the path to the sacred Inipi. That would truly be a day I could call a day of Thanksgiving.

Thank you for listening to whomever is voicing my words. My Spirit is there with you.

25 Nov - Off the Rails: A Report from the FTP Explosion in New York

A report and analysis on recent mass actions which have brought out thousands into the streets of New York.

MORE:

by Ride Free NYC (*It's Going Down*)

With a building movement around the cost and policing of public transit, New York may be the next city to join the wave of struggle sweeping the globe. On Friday, November 22nd between one and three thousand people demonstrated in the streets of Harlem and the South Bronx during the second “FTP Emergency Action” organized by a coalition brought together by Decolonize This Place. Snaking their way through Uptown Manhattan, protestors scuffled with and evaded cops for hours, eventually storming a bridge to the Bronx, then rushing into and sabotaging a subway station.

This was larger than the November 1st FTP march in Downtown Brooklyn. Images from that march of protesters vandalizing MTA property and jubilantly jumping the turnstiles at Hoyt-Schermerhorn station en masse – reminiscent of scenes from uprisings in Santiago or Hong Kong – went viral. The first march as called in response to two viral videos of NYPD brutally arresting young black men in the subway station, following an MTA announcement that it would hire five hundred new officers to crack down on fare evasion. Since then, more images of arrests and police violence in the name of “quality of life” in the subways have emerged, and many came to Harlem energized to exceed the unruliness of the first march.

The NYPD were less hands off this time. Organizers of the march announced a decoy starting location, hoping to buy some breathing room. Hours before the rally began, however, both locations were already swarming with cops. Police present were intent on using bicycle blockades and snatch arrests to disempower the crowd and keep them on the sidewalk. Yet despite making nearly sixty arrests—sometimes with spectacular violence—they were ultimately unsuccessful.

After marching half a block on the 125th Street sidewalk, a small group forced their way into the forbidden roadway, igniting an hours-long game of cat and mouse. At different moments separated sections of the crowd took the street for several blocks, marching through projects, passing out pro-farebeating flyers, and pasting and spraying anti-cop slogans on busses and cops cars. Elements of the march experimented with tactics from Hong Kong and Chile, like black umbrellas and hunting lasers to disorient attacking officers and protect the demonstration as it grew rowdier.

After a tense stand-off with a number of arrests (and dearrests), the march split into three large sections. Two advanced their through Uptown Manhattan, attempting to force their way onto the Willis Avenue Bridge, the Harlem River Drive (a major highway), and blocked a series of other major intersections. Another stormed past the police onto the Madison Avenue Bridge, leaping over the pedestrian walkway fence to take both lanes as they crossed into the Bronx. They made their way to 149th Street subway station, where dozens hopped turnstiles in a larger mass fare evasion than its predecessor earlier in the month. A turnstile arm was sawed clean during the chaos became the most resonant image of the night.

The march in the Bronx ended at the Horizon Juvenile Center, a youth jail infamous for allegations of chronic sexual abuse. As red and green lasers roved over its facade and security cameras, a speakout pledged solidarity with those jailed inside. From there most ended their night by casually heading to the nearest subway, where, despite a few tired cops standing watch, no one paid.

Where do things go from here? Police have given us a good hint of what they don't want: actions targeting the subway. CrimethInc. has called for mass fare evasions on Friday, November 29th. This would coincide with a planned fare strike in Seattle, XR's "Black Friday Rebellion," and an intensification of an ongoing slowdown by MTA workers.

The MTA is certainly paying attention. Under pressure from popular outrage they may likely scrap the 500 new cop plan in favor of a smaller number. After Friday's march, DTP, who will likely announce another action in December, implied such small concessions – which change nothing – will not impede their momentum: "We won't stop. We are not afraid. This movement only grows in numbers. The nypd out of the mta. Free transit. End of harassment of vendors. Not one demand less."

The final line alludes to a slogan from Hong Kong, where an insistence on a final demand of abolishing the police transformed the mass movement from its initial orientation of local autonomy into a revolutionary force. Even if the NYPD tempers their enforcement, or stop targeting almost entirely black and brown people, the rising cost of living could still trigger epochal struggles. Similar popular rage led to the 2014 Free Fare movement in Brazil, the 2017 Gasolinazo in Mexico, the 2018 Gilets Jaunes in France, the Paquetazo in Ecuador, and the current general revolts in Chile, Lebanon, and Iran.

While the actions in New York have not yet reached the scale and quality of these mass movements, they are potent precisely because they tap into a much deeper well of proletarian subversion. According to an MTA study, every day half a million people in New York evade paying their fare. Commuters and MTA workers alike, from all walks of life across lines of neighborhood, age, and race, have made it a habit to share unlimited swipes, hold exit gates open, or sabotage them so they do not fully close. The once-quiet movement now actively counteracts the carceral response, fines, and arrest by videotaping, heckling, alerting other riders of police presence on social media, and, as of the first November march, assembling in rowdy demonstrations of popular anger.

These last marches have been some of the most powerful experiences of collective direct action in New York City since the height of Black Lives Matter. They indicate a progression of the conflict between society's management and the people failed by their incompetence and targeted by their violence. We need to expand from these humble beginning acts of supporting one another to ride free and rebel. What if the institutions of rent, liberal democracy, and work were delegitimized to the same extent as the MTA and NYPD? One day we may not have to commute at all.

25 Nov - Left in Andover: Martha's life of faith and family

At eight years old, Kings Bay Plowshares 7 defendant Martha Hennessy learned of the assassination of JFK standing in line at Perkinsville Elementary School.

MORE:

by Susan Leader (*Chester Telegraph*)

Fifty-seven years later, the Vermont native and grandmother of eight recalls:

“That same year, 1963, we were still having duck-and-cover air raid drills because of the Cuban Missile Crisis and the perceived threat of nuclear annihilation. I was aware of this solely because of my family, and Dorothy Day reporting on it.” The seeds for her current anti-nuclear weapon activism were planted.

In his address before the U.S. Congress in 2015, Pope Francis stated:

“A nation can be considered great when it defends liberty as Lincoln did, when it fosters a culture where all people ‘dream’ of full rights for their brothers and sisters as Martin Luther King sought to do; when it strives for justice and the cause of the oppressed, as Dorothy Day did by her tireless work, the fruit of a faith which becomes dialogue ... ”

Dorothy Day (1897-1980) was also Martha’s beloved grandmother. Co-founder with Peter Maurin of the Catholic Worker Movement, Dorothy frequently took time out from her life of service to the poor, to stay with her daughter Tamar (1926-2008) and nine grandchildren in Perkinsville. In 2000, Dorothy Day was named “Servant of God,” an initial step toward canonization by the Roman Catholic Church.

In the mid-1970s, Martha taught spinning at East Hill Farm in Andover. Although our parents were acquainted, it was not until 1979 that I became close with Martha as we picked apples together at Scott Farm in Brattleboro. Somehow, Martha managed to nurse her young son as well as make it out to the orchard!

At the end of that picking season, I met John Specker, my husband-to-be. Serendipitously, he was caretaking a cottage next door to the Hennessy farm in Perkinsville. John, a recent transplant from New York, had become friends with Martha’s younger brother Hilaire (1957-2019), guide to all things Vermont.

A lifetime vegetarian, I was fascinated by the whole butchered goat that Hilaire had given to John, filling his refrigerator for weeks. I even tagged along once as John and Hilaire went deer hunting. Tamar kept a memorable bucket of prehistoric looking chicken feet handy by her wood stove for making soup stock. She was also a dedicated weaver and gardener.

I was entranced by this larger-than-life, multi-generational family living off the land, putting into practice what so many idealistic young people were moving to Vermont to experience.

Over the narrow valley hovered the spirit of Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin. His mantra of “cult, culture and cultivation” — the triple whammy that he prescribed for a good life — resonated particularly with me.

Martha had been raised religiously until a young teen and confirmed at St. Mary’s Catholic Church in Springfield. When the Catholic Worker Movement acquired a working farm in Tivoli, N.Y., in the mid-1960s, she spent summers there with her grandmother, attending mass and vespers and working in the gardens.

After a lifetime of raising children, plying her profession as an occupational therapist and working the land, a success by any measure, Martha felt called by her faith to act upon a larger social mission. To this end she

became involved in international Catholic peace missions and, starting in 2010, volunteering at Maryhouse in New York City.

April 4, 2018, the 50th anniversary of the murder of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., honoring his call to action against “the triple evils of militarism, racism and materialism,” Martha Hennessy, along with nine other non-violent Catholic activists, the Kings Bay Plowshares 7, entered the premises of the Kings Bay Naval Submarine Base in St. Mary’s, Ga.

They were arrested and subsequently convicted of conspiracy, destruction of government property and trespassing after symbolically spilling their own blood and hammering on statues of nuclear missiles. One of their banners read: The Ultimate Logic of Trident is Omnicide. The Kings Bay Naval Base is home to an arsenal of at least 120 Trident thermonuclear weapons. Each one of these is 25 times as powerful as the atomic bomb the U.S. dropped on Hiroshima in 1945, killing 140,000 civilians.

From Martha’s perspective, every Christian needs to take seriously the duty of how “...to figure out how to become a disciple of Christ in one’s own time.” She continues, quoting her grandmother Dorothy Day, “Our manifesto is the Sermon on the Mount which means that we will try to be peacemakers ... We cannot keep silent. ... Love is not the bombardment of open cities ... It is the laying down of one’s life for one’s friends.”

Reflecting upon the unexpected direction her later life has taken, Hennessy continues, “My goal is not to simply idolize Dorothy, but to do the work.”

Lunchtime a week ago, sitting in Martha’s cozy kitchen enjoying a delicious stew of homegrown lamb, vegetables and dried kidney beans (I am no longer vegetarian), I struggle to remind myself of my friend’s current status.

Instead of preparing for a Vermont winter feeding her woodstove and enjoying her full larder, she is here only temporarily, home on bail awaiting sentencing by the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Georgia, for up to 25 years in federal jail.

“Not all of us,” Hennessy says between bites of stew, “are cut out to do this work, to walk onto U.S. military bases to perform an act of sacramental nuclear disarmament. But over my lifetime I have come to a place of knowing what I need to do with my life.”

On a visit to her family in Perkinsville in the 1960s, Dorothy Day, a radical by any measure, addressed an audience in Chester. She was, Martha remembers, shouted down.

To this day — seven times a year — The Catholic Worker newspaper mysteriously continues to arrive at the Andover Town Clerk’s Office. Faithfully addressed “Andover Town Library,” excerpts from Day’s original column “On Pilgrimage,” including her diaries, are a regular feature of the paper, still priced at a penny per copy.

25 Nov - police discussed stopping anti-pipeline activists 'by any means'

Revealed: records show law enforcement has called demonstrators possible ‘domestic terrorism’ threats

MORE:

by Sam Levin and Will Parrish (*The Guardian*)

US law enforcement officials preparing for fresh Keystone XL pipeline protests have privately discussed tactics to stop activists “by any means” and have labeled demonstrators potential “domestic terrorism” threats, records reveal.

Internal government documents seen by the *Guardian* show that police and local authorities in Montana and the surrounding region have been preparing a coordinated response in the event of a new wave of protests opposing the controversial Keystone XL tar sands pipeline, which would carry crude oil from Canada to Montana, South Dakota and Nebraska.

Civil rights organizations say the documents raise concerns that law enforcement is preparing to launch an even more brutal and aggressive response than the police tactics utilized during the 2016 Standing Rock movement, which drew thousands of indigenous and environmental activists opposed to the construction of the Dakota Access pipeline (DAPL) to North Dakota.

At Standing Rock, law enforcement organized repeated rounds of mass arrests and filed a wide array of serious charges in local and federal courts against activists. Police also deployed water cannons, teargas grenades, bean bag rounds and other weapons, causing serious injuries to protesters.

The documents are mostly emails from 2017 and 2018 between local and federal authorities discussing possible Keystone protests. They show that police officials are anticipating construction will spark a sustained resistance campaign akin to the one at Standing Rock and that police are considering closing public lands near the pipeline project.

The new records have come to light as the Keystone pipeline project has overcome numerous legal hurdles with help from the Trump administration, and as the project’s owner, TC Energy (formerly TransCanada), is moving forward with initial construction efforts.

Among the major revelations in the documents:

- *Officials at a 2017 law enforcement briefing on potential Keystone XL protests said one key tactic would be to “initially deny access to the property by protestors and keep them as far away [from] the contested locations as possible by any means”, according to an email summary from a US army corps of engineers security manager in Nebraska in July 2017.*
- *Officials with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) said in 2017 that the bureau had 10 armed officers in Montana and was prepared to “work with local [law enforcement] to deny access to federal property”. In 2018, army corps officials were also in discussions with the Montana disaster and emergency services department to discuss ways to “close access” to lands near the pipeline route, including areas typically open for hunting and other activities.*
- *A “joint terrorism task force” involving the US attorney’s office and other agencies, along with federal “counterterrorism” officials, said it was prepared to assist in the response to protests and a “critical incident response team” would be available for “domestic terrorism or threats to critical infrastructure”. Authorities have also pre-emptively discussed specific potential felony charges that protesters could face, noting that a “civil disorder” statute was used to prosecute activists at Standing Rock.*
- *Authorities have been preparing for possible protests in the Fort Peck area, home to a Native American reservation and indigenous people opposing the project.*

“There is a lot of muscle behind this effort to make sure that Keystone is constructed,” said Alex Rate, legal director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Montana, which obtained the documents through records act requests and shared them with the *Guardian*. “There are historically marginalized communities, primarily indigenous folks, who have grave concerns about the impact of this pipeline on their sovereignty, their resources, their religion and culture. They have a first amendment right to assemble and make their viewpoints heard.”

Remi Bald Eagle, intergovernmental affairs coordinator of the Cheyenne River Sioux tribe, which is located along the pipeline route, said the police buildup was part of a long history of armed subjugation of native people in the region.

“This is an experience of the tide of Manifest Destiny still coming at us,” Bald Eagle said, referring to the 19th-century belief that US settlers had the right to expand across the continent.

The files follow repeated revelations that the FBI and other law enforcement agencies have investigated environmental groups and leftwing activists as possible “terrorists”.

Keystone XL was rejected by the Obama administration and then revived by Donald Trump shortly after his inauguration in 2017. The \$8bn project has been subject to multiple legal challenges, including over the environmental review process, but pre-construction efforts are now under way.

Opponents of Keystone XL have warned about the environmental and cultural impact of the project for a decade – concerns that came into sharper focus last month after the existing Keystone pipeline, which follows a similar route, leaked 383,000 gallons of tar sands into a swath of North Dakota wetlands.

The new Keystone records, which come from a number of government agencies and were released after a protracted legal battle, also show that officials have specifically met with police involved in the Standing Rock response to discuss “lessons learned”. North Dakota police officials told law enforcement prepping for Keystone that one of their biggest mistakes was their failure to keep activists far away and shut down access to nearby lands.

In one 2018 BLM document, labeled “KEYSTONE XL PIPELINE PUBLIC SAFETY ISSUES”, officials discussed the “available resources” to respond to protests in Montana.

“The FBI will have primary investigative authority for all national security investigations, including but not limited to international terrorism, domestic terrorism, and weapons of mass destruction,” BLM wrote.

US border patrol would also be available to assist law enforcement around the border and has access to “drone assets”, the document continued. Border patrol also provided a surveillance drone that police used to track Standing Rock protesters.

BLM also discussed purchasing “riot batons”, helmets and gas masks in advance of possible protests.

Mike Glasch, an army corps spokesman, said that the “by any means” comment came from the agency’s security chief, who was “relaying talking points” from police officials in Mandan and Morton County in North Dakota, adding: “Any method that we would employ to protect the safety of our employees and the public, as well as property and equipment, would be within the limits of the law and be the least invasive possible, while still protecting the public’s first amendment rights.”

A spokesperson for the Morton county sheriff, Kyle Kirchmeier, said he advises law enforcement that “may be involved with potential pipeline protests to make it their goal to keep protesters off of private property and any areas that may be considered a public hazard, such as ditches or highways”, adding that he “is supportive of people’s right to protest, but they need to do so in a lawful manner”. Kirchmeier said he did not recall the 2017 briefing.

A Mandan police spokesperson declined to comment.

Glasch said the army corps had not closed access to its land around the project, but added: “Since a construction site comes with inherent hazards, options are being analyzed for methods to keep any non-essential personnel away from potential construction sites, while at the same time considering constitutional rights.” He said it was too early to speculate about specific potential closure plans.

A spokesperson for the US attorney’s office did not respond to questions about the “terrorism” references but said the office’s “goal is to provide coordinated assistance to local, tribal and state law enforcement to protect public safety and civil rights, and to protect federal lands, while enforcing federal law”.

The FBI declined to comment.

A border patrol spokesperson said the agency would “assist, upon request, with any law enforcement activities within the border area near the pipeline”.

Spokespeople for BLM and TC Energy did not respond to questions.

“Law enforcement are getting ready. They’ve been having meetings behind closed doors,” said Angeline Cheek, an indigenous organizer from the Fort Peck reservation. “We know that they’re preparing ... We’ve been preparing for the last three years.”

Rate, from the ACLU, said there was no legal justification for the government to pre-emptively shut down lands in an effort to stop protests. He said it was also troubling for law enforcement to prepare a “militarized” response and suggest that activists could pose terrorist or criminal threats before any actions had even begun.

“They are thinking of them as potential ‘domestic terrorists’. There is simply no support for adopting that paradigm,” said Rate. “The public justifiably thinks of BLM as a land management agency and not necessarily in the business of arming themselves and going out and squelching protesters.”

Candi Brings Plenty, an Oglala Lakota Sioux activist working with the ACLU of Montana, said they were not surprised to learn that law enforcement was talking about stopping indigenous activists “by any means”.

“That is the type of language that has been spoken to us our whole lives,” they said, adding: “We live these injustices on a daily basis. This is finally being unveiled for what it is.”

Brings Plenty, who led a two-spirit camp at Standing Rock, said they would not be intimidated by law enforcement and hoped people would still support the fight against Keystone – instead of just accepting the pipeline.

“It’s almost become the norm for folks to look the other way, feeling like there isn’t something they can do, that it’s beyond their grasp,” they said. “I want folks to see these pipelines the way they do the glaciers in the arctic. This is happening right here in their own front yard.”

26 Nov - Nina Droz Franco is Free!

The Nina Droz Friends and Family Committee reported the release of the Puerto Rican patriot Nina Droz Franco from the Federal Correctional Institution in Tallahassee, Florida.

MORE:

Tuesday, November 26, Nina arrived in Puerto Rico from Tallahassee.

Police forces arrested Nina during a demonstration on May 1, 2017 where more than 60,000 people protested against the austerity policies imposed by the governments of the United States and Puerto Rico, the presence of the Fiscal Control Board and the Promise Law, and in support of workers' rights and in defense of the University of Puerto Rico. During the acts in the exercise of citizen democracy, the police of Puerto Rico and agents of the federal government of the United States on the Island, intervened with about twenty young people, among whom was Nina Droz. Of those who were arrested, she was the only one prosecuted by federal authorities, and accused of trying to burn with a single match, the huge facilities of the Banco Popular de Puerto Rico in Hato Rey.

She was admitted without bail to the Detention Center of the federal government of the United States in Guaynabo. After 13 months practically alone and in conditions of sexual harassment and violation of her rights, on June 12, 2018, Judge Aida Delgado declared Nina guilty of a conspiracy charge, of the seven that were initially charged. He sentenced her to 37 months in prison at the federal women's prison in Tallahassee, Florida and also applied three additional years in probation and the payment of a \$ 100.00 fine. As detailed in the press section, Nina has been the victim of all kinds of reprisals in retaliation against the positions she has taken in prison to support the human rights of female prisoners. In a sexist society, being a woman and also an activist, stigmatizes it twice. Nina is punished for transgressing gender boundaries.

The Nina Friends and Family Committee reiterates its support for Nina Droz and states that there is no valid reason for her prosecution and much less deprived of her freedom. Likewise, that Nina was chosen as a scapegoat in order to silence the people's voice in her just demands. The Committee recognizes in Nina the integration of young people in the social struggles of the country as we saw in the demonstrations of last summer and in the struggles of students claiming that the state's public university is the teaching center where they are guaranteed the education to the poor sectors of our society.

2 Dec - International Call For New Year's Eve Noise Demonstrations

This is a call for a raucous night of strong solidarity with those imprisoned by the state on one of the noisiest nights of the year.

MORE:

On New Year's Eve gather your crew, collective, community, organization, or just yourself and come together to raise a racket and remind those on the inside that they are not alone.

Internationally, noise demonstrations outside of prisons are a way to remember those who are held captive by the state and a way to show solidarity with imprisoned comrades and loved ones. We come together to break the loneliness and isolation.

We know that prison is beyond reform and must be completely abolished. It is a mechanism of repression used by the state to maintain a social order rooted in white supremacy, patriarchy, and heteronormativity. To come together outside of the sites of repression is to also stand in defiance of what they represent.

The logic of the state and capital—of punishment and imprisonment, must be replaced by a rejection of oppression and exploitation. This call is one step in that direction.

Wherever you are, meet on New Year's Eve at the prisons, jails, and detention centers, be loud in solidarity with those imprisoned and to push forward the idea of a world free from domination.

We send this call in solidarity with those defying state repression of large scale dissent: from the anarchist uprising in Chile to those in Exarchia facing repression as anarchist anti-state organizers, and all of those in the spaces between.

We want a world without walls and borders.

We will fight together until everyone is free!

3 Dec - Russell Maroon Shoatz Update

We're reaching out to update everyone with the latest news on Maroon's health, and to ask for your continued support as we aim to ensure that he's as well taken care of as possible.

MORE:

As you all are likely aware, Maroon was diagnosed with Stage 4 colorectal cancer this past summer, and since recovering from surgery, has begun an intensive chemotherapy regimen. Before sharing with you his latest thoughts, we ask that you consider making a donation in support of his health. Please consider the urgency of Maroon's current status, and help us help him at whatever level you're capable of. As much if not more so than ever before, we need our community's backing.

Maroon recently shared with us this written update amidst a round of chemotherapy:

I've been at SCI-Fayette in Southwest Pennsylvania since August, being kept in the prison's infirmary, only allowed out of my room for two hours in the morning, afternoon, and evening, with no outside exercise. My family had to struggle for me to have visits in the visiting room, because I've long had a prison-imposed "escape risk" separation from another prisoner here. We also had to struggle to get approval for me to wear long sleeves under the short-sleeve jumpsuit they make all prisoners wear in the visiting room, as the chemotherapy causes me to be cold.

I underwent three chemo sessions and will have a fourth tomorrow, on November 12th. I'm prescribed three-day sessions every three weeks, for six months, which is to be followed by a test at an outside hospital to judge the results of the treatment. The side effects leave me "beat up" for two weeks every month.

This is the place Pennsylvania state prisoners are concentrated to receive chemotherapy. Can you believe the prison has been cited for its extreme toxicity, due to being built over or next to mounds of coal waste?!

Lawyers of the Abolitionist Law Center (ALC) exposed it in a powerful piece, and I'm fortunate to have the ALC assisting us in our multi-pronged healthcare struggle. As of a few days ago, MOVE political prisoner Chucky Africa was transferred here and placed two doors from me. He also is battling very serious health issues!

As we approach the holiday season, we share with you our profound gratitude for your commitment to and support of Maroon. It's of course been a challenging last few months, but we continue to fight, emboldened by the care, concern, conviction, and advocacy of our extended community. Thank you all for being with us on this journey, and for amplifying our calls to bring Maroon home. We hope to share more celebratory news in the new year. In the meantime, we encourage you to write Maroon directly.

4 Dec - project FANG Fundraising Campaign Extended

Please donate at fundrazr.com/project_FANG

MORE:

The climate crisis, and ongoing destruction of landscapes and wildlife, are provoking a deepening sense of urgency in an increasing number of people. It can be a serious struggle to care for a world that is being plundered for profit, but there are more and more people turning their grief into resistance in defense of nature and other animals. From water protectors to pipeline protestors, and wildlife and caged animal defenders – good people who care for our world are standing up for all of us. Unfortunately taking such a stand can result in arrest, court, jail, and prison time.

Background:

In 2016, project FANG was established by the NYC ABC as a much-needed attempt to fill a gap in the ongoing support work for the growing number of eco and animal rights prisoners in the United States. The focus of project FANG funding is to help pay for prison visitation costs for friends and family of these prisoners.

Why are visits so important?

Visits from friends, family, and loved ones are repeatedly identified by prisoners as one of the most important life lines that exist for them. Without visits, the crushing isolation of life inside a prison becomes unbearable. However, visits can often be prohibitively expensive. Travel costs might include not only an expensive plane ticket, but also lodging, a rental car, and meals. These quickly add up to hundreds of dollars.

How you can help:

Currently, project FANG has committed funding of \$5,000 per year, but due to the increase in eco and animal rights prisoners, and requests for visitation funding, we need to increase our available funds. With your support we are aiming to double the fund's annual budget for 2019 and 2020 by raising \$10,000. Can you help us reach our \$10,000 goal?

13 Dec - Metropolitan Anarchist Coordinating Council (MACC) General Assembly

WHAT: General Assembly

WHEN: 6:30-9:00pm, Friday, December 13th

WHERE: Verso Books–20 Jay Street, Brooklyn

COST: FREE

MORE:

The Metropolitan Anarchist Coordinating Council (MACC) is hosting one of our monthly general assemblies. GAs are a great opportunity to get plugged in with MACC's projects and working groups. MACC assemblies are open to all anarchists, antifascists, anti-authoritarians and those interested in anarchist ideas and organizing so please invite your friends and share widely! We encourage everyone to come with ideas about what they would like to see for future campaigns or actions and what direction they'd like MACC to take to build a more powerful, militant anarchist movement. Bring snacks (pre-packaged, vegan, and gluten-free options encouraged)!

Agenda will be announced after the organizing assembly.

An orientation will precede the assembly starting at 6:30 PM for those interested in familiarizing themselves with MACC, general assemblies, and anarchist ideas. General Assembly will begin at 7:00 PM. For more information visit macc.nyc or contact us at info@macc.nyc

13 Dec - Jericho Holiday Party

WHAT: End-of-year Holiday Party

WHEN: 6:00pm, Friday, December 13th

WHERE: The People's Forum—320 West 37th Street, Manhattan 10018

COST: FREE

MORE:

Join NYC Jericho for a winter solstice holiday party to free all political prisoners and prisoners of war. Celebrate victories, remember ancestors, and strengthen the movement! Enjoy refreshments, camaraderie, raffle prizes, and cheer!

14 Dec - Survived & Punished Holiday Letter Writing Event

WHAT: Holiday Card Party

WHEN: 1:00pm, Saturday, December 14th

WHERE: The People's Forum—320 West 37th Street, Manhattan 10018

COST: FREE

MORE:

Please join Survived and Punished NY for a holiday letter writing event!

Our goal for this public event is to send cards to all of our incarcerated contacts. Folks with incarcerated loved ones are more than welcome to join us and write to anyone, regardless of their or your affiliation with S&P NY.

The event will begin with a grounding and brief introduction, followed by letter writing. Folks can come and go as they feel comfortable to do so.

We will provide snacks, letter writing supplies, and good vibes! Additional donations of food, stamps, cards and envelopes, etc. are always welcome, but no financial or material contribution is required to attend this free event.

We look forward to seeing many of you there, and on many other occasions to come, as we continue to strengthen our relationships with survivors of incarceration and all forms of state violence.

15 Dec - Send Love Through the Walls 2019

WHAT: Holiday Card-Writing For Political Prisoners

WHEN: 4:00-8:00pm, Sunday, December 15th

WHERE: 263 Eastern Parkway, Apartment 5D (Direction Below)

COST: FREE (Donations to cover the cost of stamps greatly appreciated)

MORE:

In what many prisoners have told us is their favorite event of the year, Resistance in Brooklyn and NYC Anarchist Black Cross again join forces to bring you the annual holiday card-writing party for U.S. held political prisoners, prisoners of war, and prisoners of conscience. This event is always a lot of fun, the food outstanding, the camaraderie lively, and the handmade cards flat out amazing. This year will be no

different. So plan to bring your friends, your creativity, and a healthy appetite. We'll have updates on the pp/pow campaigns as well as paints, markers, crayons, and envelopes.

Directions:

Getting to 263 Eastern Parkway is simple:

From the 2/3/4/5 or Franklin Avenue Shuttle:

Franklin Avenue Stop: Walk west on Eastern Parkway (away from Franklin Avenue, toward Classon Avenue). We're about half a block down on the north side of the street. When you go into the building, take the elevator to your left.

17 Nov - Anarchists Care About Books (ACAB): October: The Story of the Russian Revolution

WHAT: Book club

WHEN: 4:00pm, Sunday, December 15th

WHERE: Bluestockings—172 Allen Street, New York 10002

COST: FREE

MORE:

Join us to discuss October: The Story of the Russian Revolution by China Miéville.

MACC events are open to all anarchists, antifascists, anti-authoritarians and those interested in anarchist ideas and organizing.

Bluestockings is wheelchair accessible, with no steps or platforms, and wide aisles between shelves. The bathroom is not wheelchair accessible. There is a Starbucks two short blocks down the street with an accessible bathroom (at Allen and Delancey). Metered street parking is available in the blocks surrounding Bluestockings. Bluestockings is not a scent-free space, but we encourage visitors to please refrain from wearing perfumes, colognes or other scented products (including essential oils) and smoke far away from the entrance to the space.

31 Dec - Noise Demo Against the Prison Industrial Complex, In Solidarity with PPs and POWs

WHAT: Noise Demo Against the PIC, for the Liberation of PPs + POWs

WHEN: 9:00pm, Tuesday, December 31st

WHERE: Metropolitan Correction Center—Pearl Street, between Cardinal Hayes Place and Park Row (J to Chambers Street or 4/5/6/ to City Hall)

BRING: Noisemakers, air horns, drums, anything that is loud!

MORE:

On the noisiest night of the year in New York City, come help us remind folks locked up that they are not alone. NYC Anarchist Black Cross, in response to an international call for noise demonstrations outside of prisons, is asking folks to join us outside of the Metropolitan Correctional Center (MCC) in lower Manhattan. Come, not to appeal to authority, speak truth to power, or any other contrivance, but rather to stand arm in arm with comrades and show direct solidarity to those on the other side of the wall.

The state, writ large, is targeting anarchists all across the United States and abroad. This will be both protest and celebration. To keep the cold at bay, comrades from MACC will be on hand with cookies and hot cocoa to keep the vocal cords nice and warm.