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Updates for December 23rd

6 Dec - FBI Making List of American "Extremists," Leaked Memo Reveals

Are you on Trump's naughty list?

MORE:

by Ken Klippenstein

Attorney General Pam Bondi is ordering the FBI to "compile a list of groups or entities engaging in acts that may constitute domestic terrorism," according to a Justice Department memo published here exclusively.

The target is those expressing "opposition to law and immigration enforcement; extreme views in favor of mass migration and open borders; adherence to radical gender ideology," as well as "anti-Americanism," "anti-capitalism," and "anti-Christianity."

That language echoes the so-called indicators of terrorism identified by President Trump's directive National Security Presidential Memorandum-7, or NSPM-7, which the memo says it's intended to implement. Where NSPM-7 was a declaration of war on just about anyone who isn't MAGA, this is the war plan for how the government will wage it on a tactical level.

In addition to compiling a list of undesirables, Bondi directs the FBI to enhance the capabilities (and publicity) of its tipline in order to more aggressively solicit tips from the American public on, well, other Americans. To that end, Bondi also directs the FBI to establish "a cash reward system" for information leading to identification and arrest of leadership figures within these purported domestic terrorist organizations. (The memo later instructs the FBI to "establish cooperators to provide information and eventually testify against other members" of the groups.)

The payouts don't end there. Justice Department grants are now to prioritize funding to programs for state and local law enforcement to go after domestic terrorism.

In a section titled "Defining the domestic terrorism threat," the memo cites "extreme viewpoints on immigration, radical gender ideology, and anti-American sentiment" — indicators that federal law enforcement are instructed to refer to FBI Joint Terrorism Task Forces (JTTFs). Those JTTFs are then instructed to "use all available investigative tools" in order to "map the full network of culpable actors involved" in both "inside and outside the United States."

The memo also directs the FBI and JTTFs to retroactively investigate incidents going back five years, authorizing the JTTFs in particular to use everything at their disposal to do so.

"Upon receipt of these referrals, the JTTFs shall use all available investigative tools, consistent with law enforcement internal policies and statutory obligations, to map the full network of culpable actors involved in the referred conduct inside and outside the United States," the memo says.

For months, major media outlets have largely blown off the story of NSPM-7, thinking it was all just Trump bluster and too crazy to be serious. But a memo like this one shows you that the administration is absolutely taking this seriously — even if the media are not — and is actively working to operationalize NSPM-7.

NSPM-7 was signed in September largely in response to the murder of Charlie Kirk, which was a 9/11-type event for the Trump administration, as I've reported. (Kirk's assassination is referenced explicitly in the Justice Department memo.) As anyone who lived through 9/11 can remember, the government doesn't always think rationally in moments like those, to say the least. And so here we are, with a new War on Terrorism — only this time, millions of Americans like you and I could be the target.

7 Dec - Starved and charged: Prisoners file suit

Food service company Aramark is leaving incarcerated people in West Virginia with empty stomachs and their loved ones with empty pockets, a federal class-action lawsuit alleges.

MORE:

by Daja E. Henry (*The Marshall Project*)

The lawsuit, filed in a federal district court in West Virginia, claims that Aramark is exploiting incarcerated people at Mount Olive Correctional Complex by denying them adequate meals — instead pushing them and their families to spend money on food items and care packages they must also purchase from the same company.

Marcus P. McKinley said in a court filing that he has seen the quality of the food decline during his nearly 12 years in Mount Olive — being served leftovers and turkey "pellets" in place of fresh meat — as well as the quantity. He spends nearly all his \$70 monthly income on commissary items to supplement the small food portions. Another plaintiff, Judy Riggs, said she spent over \$4,000 to buy meals from Aramark's food-for-purchase programs for her incarcerated loved ones since 2022.

"Food is a uniquely powerful tool, and Aramark is using it to exploit a captive consumer market of incarcerated people and their families to unlawfully profit off them," Shennan Kavanagh, director of litigation at the National Consumer Law Center, said in a press release.

The lawsuit alleges that this scheme unfairly targets incarcerated people in a bid to drive profits for Aramark, which generated \$18.5 billion in fiscal year 2025.

Aramark has exclusive control over all food in West Virginia's correctional facilities, and is the largest food services provider for prisons and jails in the United States, according to the lawsuit. As of Dec. 1, Aramark's portfolio includes 16 state departments of corrections. Last year, the company reported serving approximately 450 correctional facilities.

For Teri Castle, the shift to Aramark in 2019 was noticeable. She was incarcerated and working in the kitchen at West Virginia's Lakin Correctional Center. She watched as the fresh produce grown to stock the salad bar disappeared. Hamburger patties were replaced with processed substitutes and real eggs with processed ones.

The shift became noticeable in her health, too. She had little energy and her stomach just "wasn't working right." She struggled with chronic constipation, high blood pressure and hemorrhoids so bad that she ultimately needed surgery.

"They are more interested in making money and saving money than they are in the health of the people eating that food," Castle said.

The new legal challenge is based on consumer protection laws intended to prevent unfair, deceptive or abusive practices. At the federal level, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau has traditionally been tasked with enforcing these laws, while states also have their own consumer protection statutes and enforcement mechanisms.

The lawsuit alleges that Aramark is in violation of the West Virginia Consumer Credit and Protection Act because it is unfair to people who — because their incarceration limits what they can buy and where they can buy it from — have no other, less exploitative options to feed themselves.

The National Consumer Law Center, an economic justice advocacy organization involved in the lawsuit, last year deemed incarcerated people particularly vulnerable to financial exploitation because of their limited financial resources, low education levels and high rates of mental illness.

"The goal here really is just to require that companies follow the same laws with respect to incarcerated people that they have to follow with everybody else. That they're not allowed to exploit people because they're incarcerated," said Rebecca Livengood, a lawyer representing the incarcerated people and their families in this lawsuit.

Aramark did not respond to requests for comment.

Prison food is notoriously bad, and Aramark has been the subject of many food-related horror stories. These reports include food contaminated with mouse droppings, maggots, cakes nibbled on by rats, spoiled chicken and "mass poisonings."

The new lawsuit, though, focuses on the lack of food available to incarcerated people each day. This problem is not new, nor is it confined to West Virginia. In Nevada, incarcerated people reported eating toothpaste, antacids, salt and toilet paper to ease hunger pangs.

Food insecurity in prison can have lasting effects, both physically and mentally, said Leslie Soble, author of the newly released book "Eating Behind Bars: Ending the Hidden Punishment of Food in Prison."

"You get sentenced to five years in prison, or whatever the sentence is. You don't get sentenced to five years in prison and lifelong diabetes. But that's the kind of thing that's actually happening to people," Soble said. "That in itself is a form of extended punishment."

The allegations in the lawsuit came as no surprise to Soble, whose research included surveying formerly incarcerated people and visiting prison kitchens. This research, compiled in a 2020 report, found many of the same horror stories, including spoiled food and skimpy portions.

Experts say food is just one sector of a larger prison services industry that siphons wealth from some of the country's poorest communities. Family members of incarcerated people have reported going into debt from the costs of phone calls and visits, or working multiple jobs to afford them.

Incarcerated people and their families also buy toiletries and basic hygiene products, fans in the sweltering heat of the summer, snacks from the commissary, medical care and clothing. These products are often overpriced, despite abysmal wages for prison labor. Incarcerated workers often earn less than \$1 per hour, if they are paid at all.

"It's a literally captive market," Livengood said. "It's a group of people who have no ability to purchase anything other than what they're allowed to purchase. And in so many of those facets of life, food, clothing, video, visits, emails ... Many of those have now been farmed out to companies who expect to profit from them."

Meanwhile, the large companies that dominate prison services bring in billions in revenue — nearly as much as governments pay to operate private prisons. And the correctional facilities they do business with often benefit as well, in the form of site commissions, a percentage of the sales revenue.

There is little regulation of these dominant companies that monopolize "prison retail," wrote Stephen Raher, an attorney who previously served as general counsel of the Prison Policy Initiative. Instead, protections for incarcerated consumers remain "scattered and often illusory."

"Time and time again, concerns about abusive monopolist business practices are dismissed by policymakers who claim that correctional agencies take these matters into account when awarding exclusive vendor contracts," Rather wrote.

In recent years, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau has delivered some victories for incarcerated people.

In 2021, the CFPB fined JPay, a financial services company, for charging people newly released from prison unfair fees to access their own money on prepaid debit cards they were required to use.

And in 2024, the CFPB ordered Global Tel Link to return \$3 million to its consumers. The Bureau found that the company engaged in unfair practices by blocking consumers' accounts and preventing friends and family from sending funds via debit or credit card transfer.

However, similar relief may be harder to come by, as the Trump administration moves to dismantle the agency. Last month, the Justice Department declared the agency's funding mechanism unlawful, which could leave it without a budget next year. And this week, a top official at the agency resigned, citing his frustration with the lack of a path for the agency to enforce the law.

9 Dec - Update on the repressive situation of Gabriel Pombo da Silva

Italy: The latest update on the repressive situation in Italy involving Gabriel Pombo da Silva is as follows...

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In July 2022, the Italian trial related to the repressive operation "Scripta Manent" concluded for Gabriel Pombo da Silva and other comrades. He received a two-year sentence for "incitement to commit a crime."

In December 2023, the Turin court notified Gabriel of the same final sentence. In January 2024, Gabriel's Italian lawyer requested alternative measures to imprisonment. This request was justified by a "social/family/work investigation" carried out by a social worker from the Turin surveillance court. The report, submitted to the supervisory judge in June 2025, emphasized Gabriel's "lack of self-criticism of his own values," revealing the Italian authorities' intention for revenge.

At this point, the Turin surveillance court was informed that the Spanish state had recognized two years ago that Gabriel had served an additional two years and eight months of his sentence. The Italian lawyer therefore requested the "fungibility of the sentence," meaning Italy's recognition of the additional time served (according to European law, all European Union member countries are required to recognize it). On November 12, the final hearing was held at the Turin Court. A couple of days ago, the court issued its response, reasoning, and conclusion in writing. However, Italy does not recognize the "fungibility of the sentence," nor does it grant Gabriel any alternative to prison due to his "lack of self-criticism of his own values." Consequently, Italy activated the execution order.

Currently, Gabriel could only be arrested on Italian soil, but Turin could issue a European arrest warrant if it wished, given that a sentence of between two and four years legitimizes the judge's right to discretion. In short, our comrade Gabriel could be arrested at any time, whether in a week or two years.

The Spanish state should not arrest Gabriel if an arrest warrant arrives because it recognizes that the sentence is excessive. However, it would be naive to trust this theory, knowing that it may not apply to an anarchist in practice.

10 Dec - Illustrated Guide Version 18.11 Uploaded!

nycabc.wordpress.com/2025/12/10/guide_18_11

MORE:

We've finished the latest version of the NYC ABC "Illustrated Guide to Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War" and it's available for viewing (and download) by visiting the link at the top of this post. This update includes updated mini-bios, photos, and address changes for several prisoners. Sadly, this edition includes the removal of Imam Jamil Al-Amin. Rest easy, Imam Jamil.

11 Dec - It Was the State: El Yorch Has Died In Prison

Mexico: Last Tuesday, December 9, at 11:30 a.m., Yorch, an anarcho-punk comrade, passed away.

MORE:

by La Zarzamora (*Abolition Media*)

He had been in critical condition for several days after not receiving the necessary medical attention in prison. Yorch, who died in the custody of the Mexican prison system, will be laid to rest at the San Nicolás Tolentino cemetery, located on Av. San Lorenzo, in the San Juan de Iztapalapa area.

Yorch was on life support due to neurological damage caused by not receiving adequate medical care in prison, commensurate with the severity of his condition. The problems began in 2019 when Yorch suffered from appendicitis that went untreated. From then on, his health began to deteriorate progressively, a situation exacerbated by his imprisonment and the constant obstruction by prison guards and the judicial system, which prevented him from accessing healthcare.

His friends shared the sad news: "Today at 11:30 a.m., our beloved comrade and brother Yorch fought his final battle, leaving his tired and weakened body behind. We will be in touch so that when the time is right, you can join us to embrace and say goodbye to our brother." For the moment, NOTHING IS NEEDED (no money, nothing), everything is covered, and we are organizing the logistics. All that remains is the bureaucratic process for his release, and afterwards, we WILL need the loving presence of his entire chosen family, who have been such an important part of his life."

The independent news outlet Noticias de Abajo lamented Yorch's death and denounced the state as responsible: "It was the State that took Yorch's life, the same State that, through a setup involving authorities from UNAM and the Mexico City government, imprisoned him. The same State that takes the lives of political prisoners with its jails and its prison and judicial system. He was murdered by the negligence of the State, he was kidnapped for several years by a bad government based on lies. He was persecuted and harassed by the university authorities. And after accusing him twice for the same case, and falsifying the reasons for his detention, he was mistreated while being denied the medical attention he needed in this kidnapping by the Mexican State."

A few days ago, in La Zarzamora, we published an article about the serious health condition of the young anarcho-punk Jorge Esquivel "El Yorch," and it's truly difficult to communicate this. It's terrible to see that the lives of our comrades in prison are in constant danger, that any health problem can worsen without options within the confines of prison. We know that the state, supposedly the guarantor of the lives of prisoners, actually seeks to isolate and eliminate us. Deaths in prison cannot continue to be tolerated.

From the south of Abya Yala, we send strength and love to his comrades, and all our hatred and condemnation to the prison guards and the state responsible for every death in prison.

11 Dec - In Contempt #2 Is Out

In Contempt, a monthly roundup of political prisoner, prison rebel, and repression news, happenings, announcements, action and analysis, is out, covering Imam Jamil Al-Amin, Yorch Esquivel, Prisoners for Palestine, and more.

MORE:

You can read In Contempt online or download it reformatted as a zine at incontempt.noblogs.org

11 Dec - Historic 12-day March for Mumia ends at SCI Mahanoy

Around 150 participants filled both sides of the entrance road to State Correctional Institution (SCI) Mahanoy for a rally on December 9—the final day of the historic March for Mumia. The march demanded "Justice for Mumia Abu-Jamal, End Medical Neglect [in Pennsylvania prisons] and End Elder Abuse."

MORE:

by Betsey Piette

The 12-day, 103-mile march started in Philadelphia on November 28 and ended in Frackville, Pennsylvania, with over 65 people walking the last three miles.

The seven individuals who completed the entire march included Saleemah Hadi, Lawrence Hamm and Steve Bernhaut; Dr. Richardo Alvarez, Mumia's medical adviser; Baba Zayid Muhammad, a Black Panther Party cub and organizer with the New York Malcolm X Commemoration Committee; Bob Nash with Veterans for Peace; and Joe Piette, with the Mobilization4Mumia.

Many others marched for a day or two, or provided food, transportation, and other critical organizational support.

A long-time supporter of Mumia, Pam Africa, with International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal, reminded people that Mumia was a journalist, a teacher, and a family man, who was railroaded and never had a fair trial. She urged people to keep on fighting for justice for Mumia.

Lawrence Hamm stressed the demand that the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections give Mumia the surgery and medical treatment he needs. He said that all prisoners should receive the medical care they need. Hamm called the DOC's refusal to give medical care "a form of torture" that can result in "death by medical neglect."

Hamm also condemned the development of privately-owned prisons, whose owners profit while people, disproportionately Black and Brown, suffer. He called out Geo Group which owns one of the largest detention centers for immigrants in New Jersey.

Mumia's fight for hep C treatment benefited everyone

Dr. Joseph Harris, who served as Mumia's medical adviser during the prisoner's battle to receive the cure for hepatitis C, reminded the crowd that "we were able to win, not just for Mumia, but for every prisoner who needed the expensive \$1,000 per each of 84 pills available at the time."

Cindy Lou, with Mobilization4Mumia, read a statement from the United Campaign to Free Georges Ibrahim Abdallah, the Lebanese freedom fighter for Palestine, who was released from a French prison in July after serving 20 years (Georges Abdallah actually served more than 40 years and was the longest-held prisoner in Europe). It noted: "Solidarity with revolutionary prisoners, with Mumia Abu-Jamal as with Georges Abdallah, with all revolutionary political prisoners, is an urgent collective task that must be carried out and pursued."

"The conviction that victory is possible in this specific struggle must be based on experience, which shows that, in the long haul, resistance and mobilization ultimately pay off. Resisting, continuing to resist, is not a tactical choice specific to one stage of the struggle, it is a strategy and a historical process."

Dr. Alvarez said that through multiple documents and legal briefs the American Public Health Association has raised that prison abolition is a public health issue.

Jian White, one of the younger participants who spent multiple days on the march, told the rally – that included dozens of younger activists – "We know what is necessary at this time. Time is up for this system. Time is up for imperialism. They can't derail this movement. They can't derail our solidarity for Mumia, who has been incarcerated for 44 years because of his strong analysis of the corporate state."

White expressed solidarity with the "elders who have held up this movement and inspired us since day one."

Jacky Hortaut from France representing Libérons Mumia, Schuylkill County resident Rubina Tareen, Pastor Keith Collins and YahNé Ndgo also addressed the assembled crowd. Gabriel Bryant chaired the event.

13 Dec - Activist Shot While Open Carrying at 'No Kings' Protest Will Not Face Charges, but Security Volunteer Will

Prosecutors announced last week that they would not pursue charges against Arturo Gamboa, an activist in Utah who was arrested in June after a volunteer "peacekeeper" opened fire at a large "No Kings" protest injuring Gamboa and killing Arthur "Afa" Folasa Ah Loo.

MORE:

by Sean Summers (*Unicorn Riot*)

The volunteer, tasked with security for the march and later identified as Matt Alder, saw Gamboa assembling a legally owned, legally carried AR-15-style rifle near the march in downtown Salt Lake City on June 14. Alarmed, Alder called for another volunteer security guard before drawing a concealed handgun. As Gamboa tried to rejoin the march, Alder opened fire, hitting Gamboa and killing Ah Loo.

Immediately after the shooting, police arrested Gamboa on a murder charge. The arresting officer claimed that Gamboa's actions had created the situation that caused Alder to fear for his life and the lives of others, prompting Alder to open fire.

As a result, Gamboa was blamed for Ah Loo's death for having "acted under circumstances that showed a depraved indifference to human life, knowingly engag[ing] in conduct that created a grave risk of death and ultimately caused the death of an innocent community member," according to a police statement.

Gamboa was held without bail for five days under suspicion of committing a violent felony. Police briefly detained Alder but did not take him into custody.

But nearly six months after the incident, Salt Lake's District Attorney Sim Gill has decided not to press charges against Gamboa, and instead will pursue a manslaughter charge against Alder.

On Tuesday, Gamboa gave his first public statement on the case since his arrest during a press conference organized by his lawyer Greg Skordas.

Throughout the hour-long press event, Gamboa emphasized that not only was he wrongly blamed for the incident and Ah Loo's death, but that he had faced significant struggles as a result of how the incident was handled.

"I did not shoot anybody. I did not fire a single shot. I did not have any ammunition in the rifle," Gamboa said. "However, the blame was placed squarely on my shoulders."

Gamboa described his arrest and the drawn-out process leading to last week's decision as a scapegoating, and he asserted that he was doing nothing more than exercising his First and Second Amendment rights that day.

"From the moment that everything happened, I was treated as a psychopathic villain," Gamboa told reporters Tuesday.

The mental and physical tolls that the ordeal have taken on Gamboa have been difficult and long-lasting – from his incarceration to his medical recovery, Gamboa described the struggles he's faced since his June arrest.

"The very moment that I was put into handcuffs, I was not out of handcuffs until I was in the jail," save for occasional medical treatment, he said. "The most time that I spent unhandcuffed, outside of chains, was within the confines of a maximum-security cell."

Gamboa has been saddled with tens of thousands in medical debt after his hospitalization and treatment for being shot through the abdomen.

He has also faced difficulty living under the conditions of his release, Skordas told reporters, uncertain about what he was and wasn't allowed to do while out on bail.

As for who to hold responsible for the incident, Gamboa places the blame on the event's organizers and Alder.

"We all know the only person who drew their firearm, aimed it and fired it into a crowd of people, who recklessly discharged their firearm, who had the intention of murdering me, and who did murder Mr. Ah Loo," Gamboa said, alluding to Alder.

An image of Arthur "Afa" Ah Loo adorns a memorial shrine set up on State Street in downtown Salt Lake City near the place he was shot at the June 'No Kings' protest.

Attorneys for Ah Loo's family said they will file a wrongful death suit against Alder in the coming weeks and that they may pursue civil charges against 50501, the organization behind the No Kings march, as well as Armed Queens, a leftist gun advocacy group who attorneys say helped coordinate security for the June march.

Ah Loo's family will not pursue legal action against Gamboa, an attorney for the family said.

When asked at Tuesday's press conference if Gamboa may pursue charges against Alder, Skordas told reporters that they do not want to diminish any damages Ah Loo's family may be entitled to, and that they will defer to the wishes of Ah Loo's family and legal representation.

14 Dec - Persecution of anarchist prisoners' parents

Belarus: Showing solidarity with political prisoners is also punishable, even when it comes from their parents.

MORE:

by Anarchist Black Cross Belarus

In the following three examples, you will learn how this form of repression looks like in the case of anarchists.

Arresting relatives to put pressure on exiled activists

On 26 November 2021, armed police raided the home of Gayane Akhtyan, the mother of exiled anarchist Roman Halilov. The woman was filmed standing on her knees and then allegedly admitting to participation in protests. The video was circulated by cops in a Telegram channel named Anarchists of Belarus with a caption “Parents held responsible for their children” with a clear intention to put pressure on Roman Halilov.

Gayane was put in detention and later sentenced to restricted freedom in an open-type facility. She eventually left Belarus.

Convicting relatives for supporting their imprisoned sons

Tatiana Frantskevich is the mother of Aleksandr Frantskevich who is sentenced to 18 years of prison as a leader of an “international anarchist criminal organization”. On 19 July 2024, she and her sister were detained and later sentenced to 3 years and 3 months in prison for “aiding extremist activity”.

Currently, nobody can support Aleksandr as only close relatives are allowed to send care packages, make visits and exchange correspondence with prisoners in Belarus.

Putting relatives on international wanted list

In October 2025, the wanted persons list maintained by the Russian Federation was updated to include Anastasia Yemelyanova, the mother of Nikita Yemelyanov, an anarchist who has been in prison since 2019 and whose original sentence has been prolonged twice.

Nikita’s mother now also lives in exile.

These cases are not isolated episodes and this type of pressure is not only applied to anarchists. Five years after the 2020 uprising, Belarus still keeps thousands of people in prison and convicts a hundred more every month.

15 Dec - A message from Jessica Reznicek

Eco-prisoner Jessica Reznicek has been transferred to a halfway house and has written the following.

MORE:

I am surprised to say that I now reside in transitional housing. I left Waseca Federal Correctional Institution on October 1st, thanking God to have seen the beautiful face of my dear friend Julie Brown in the prison parking lot there to pick me up and transport me to my new home, a halfway house. It had been over 5 years since she and I said our goodbyes on the Des Moines Catholic Worker front porch, both shedding a few tears at the time, me a nervous wreck preparing for the greatest unknown I’d yet experienced. Needless to say, it was a heartfelt reunion.

So, I’ve been in the halfway house scene for a few weeks now, settling in as well as possible, I suppose. Although I am no longer in prison, I am still Bureau of Prison property. Let me expand on that a bit further. If I had any doubt about what it means to be BOP property, it was cleared up when one time, a few years back, a group of us were playing a prison yard softball game. It was early in the year, and so we were all pretty stir crazy after a long winter indoors and eager to get out of our housing units and to get a little sunshine and fresh air.

Well, a few of the women got a little too much sun and by the following morning were pretty red-faced, and then one of the women was called to her counselor’s office to receive a disciplinary write up for her sunburn: “destruction of government property”. Wow! It kind of hit me in a different way at that moment. So, although there is no longer a fence surrounding me, until 10/01/2027, every move I make is monitored. Any and all doctor’s appointments, mental health therapy sessions, all communication on my phone and email, any employment endeavors, all overseen by BOP.

Taking it all in, where I've been, where I am now, and heading toward home confinement, am I doing alright? In a real way, no probably not. I am sad all the time. It is hard to be hopeful about too many good days ahead any time soon. Did prison do that to me? Can I blame the BOP? Is it because I still can't garden or hike or swim? Or maybe I could blame the fact the world, at a glance, seems as bad as it ever was? All I know is that for a while now the laughter has left me.

I thank everyone for their prayers, thoughts, letters, and contributions along the way. Without you I don't know where I'd be during these dark times. Thank you so very much.

16 Dec - Longtime Paid FBI Informant Was Instrumental in Terror Case Against "Turtle Island Liberation Front"

Kash Patel and others touted the FBI's investigative work, but the few available details point to a more complicated picture.

MORE:

by Noah Hurowitz and Trevor Aaronson (*The Intercept*)

An FBI investigation into an alleged terror plot in Southern California bears the familiar hallmarks of the bureau's long-running use of informants and undercover agents to advance plots that might not otherwise have materialized, court documents show.

News of the plot surfaced Monday morning in a Fox News report that ran ahead of court filings or official statements. Within minutes, FBI officials amplified the story on social media.

"PROTECT THE HOMELAND and CRUSH VIOLENT CRIME," wrote FBI Deputy Director Dan Bongino, a former podcaster. "These words are not slogans, they're the investigative pillars of this FBI."

What followed, however, painted a more complicated picture.

The limited details available suggest an investigation that leaned heavily on a paid informant and at least one undercover FBI agent, according to an affidavit filed in federal court. The informant and the undercover agent were involved in nearly every stage of the case, including discussions of operational security and transporting members of the group to the site in the Mojave Desert where federal agents ultimately made the arrests.

The informant, who has worked other cases on the FBI's payroll since 2021, had been in contact with the group known as the Turtle Island Liberation Front since at least late November, just two months after President Donald Trump designated "antifa" a domestic terrorism organization.

On the morning of December 15, FBI Director Kash Patel announced the arrests, calling the plot "a credible, imminent terrorist threat."

Yet the case had the familiar markings of FBI terrorism stings that stretch back more than two decades — hundreds of cases that have disproportionately targeted left-wing activists and Muslims, and, less often, right-wing actors.

"Bring Cases, Get Paid"

Since the September 11 attacks, the FBI has relied on informants to identify and build terrorism cases. The structure has created perverse incentives for potential informants. Their cooperation can get them out of criminal cases of their own and lead to handsome monetary compensation. The FBI's call is simple: Bring cases, get paid.

Rick Smith, a security consultant and former FBI agent, said confidential sources are essential to investigative police work, but cautioned that they come with inherent baggage.

“They’re sources, they’re not ordinary citizens,” Smith said. “They have either been compromised in some way, or they’re going to be paid. Either way, they’ve got some sort of skin in the game. They’re getting something out of it.”

In the years after 2001 attacks, the FBI created a market for cases involving left-wing activists and Muslims. After the January 6 Capitol riot, the bureau made clear to informants that right-wing extremism was a priority. Now, under the second Trump administration, the federal government’s focus is again turning to perceived left-wing extremism.

In September, days after the terror designation of antifa, Trump outlined his administration’s war on the left in a memo titled National Security Presidential Memorandum 7, or NSPM-7, which called for the National Joint Terrorism Task Force to coordinate with local offices to investigate alleged federal crimes by political radicals. The head of the federal prosecutor’s office in Los Angeles said on Monday that the Turtle Island Liberation Front arrests stemmed from Trump’s executive order.

Key questions in the Turtle Island Liberation Front case, however, remain unanswered. It is still unclear how the FBI first identified the group or how long the informant had been embedded before the bomb plot emerged — a period defense attorneys say is central to any serious examination of entrapment, whereby defendants are coerced into crimes they would not otherwise commit, a frequent criticism of stings involving paid informants and undercover agents.

“The question that immediately popped into my mind was that: There’s a reference to a confidential human source, but there’s no indication of how that source came to be,” said Brad Crowder, an activist and union organizer who was convicted in a case of alleged violent protest plans that involved a confidential informant. “It’s not totally out of the realm of possibilities that this idea was planted or floated by whoever this confidential human source might be.”

Turtle Island Case

Despite comments from Attorney General Pam Bondi, Patel, and others characterizing the Turtle Island Liberation Front as a coherent group and a Signal chat called “Black Lotus” as an ultra-radical subset, there’s little evidence that any group by that name exists beyond a small digital footprint and a handful of attempts at organizing community events, including a self-defense workshop and a punk rock benefit show planned for February.

The Instagram page for the Turtle Island Liberation Front cited in the complaint had just over 1,000 followers as of Tuesday morning — after it was widely publicized — and its first post came in late July. The YouTube channel bearing the group’s name, which had just 18 subscribers as of Tuesday morning, was registered on July 17 and contains a single video posted on September 16.

Online, the group styled itself as radical and righteous. Its activists spoke in the language of solidarity with Palestinians and Indigenous people, railing against U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and American power. On Instagram, they posted slogans and absolutes:

“Become a revolutionary.”

“America has always been the brutal evil monster that some of you don’t want to face.”

“Resistance is the deepest form of love.”

The informant did not, however, meet with the group on November 26 for its slogans.

According to the affidavit, the informant met up with Audrey Illeene Carroll, who went by the nickname Asiginaak. At the meeting, Carroll handed over eight pages covered with handwriting in blue ink. The document was titled “Operation Midnight Sun,” and laid out a plan to detonate backpack bombs at five separate locations on New Year’s Eve, when fireworks would mask the sound of explosions. The plan was unfinished. Beneath the list of targets were blank lines, marked: “add more if enough comrades.” (Carroll’s attorney did not immediately respond to a request for comment.)

Over the following weeks, the plot advanced, according to court filings. A Signal group was created for, in the participants’ words, “everything radical,” including the bomb plan itself. On December 7, the supposed bomb plot expanded to include an undercover FBI agent. At that meeting, Carroll distributed pages describing how to build the bombs. She said she already had 13 PVC pipes cut to size and had ordered two five-pound bags of potassium nitrate from Amazon, believing naively that a burner account she set up was keeping her anonymous. Delivery was scheduled for December 11.

The FBI had visibility into nearly every part of the supply chain: chemicals ordered online and pistol primers purchased at a retail store. Agents could have intervened at any stage. They didn’t. Instead, the bureau allowed the plan to continue, with both an informant and an undercover agent actively participating in the conspiracy.

On December 12, the group drove into the desert with an aim of testing the bombs. They took two vehicles: the informant in one, the undercover agent in the other. Riding with the undercover agent was Zachary Aaron Page, who went by the nickname AK. He suggested using cigarettes as a delayed fuse. In the other car, Carroll told another member that the desert exercise was a dry run for the New Year’s Eve attack.

“What we’re doing will be considered a terrorist act,” she said, according to the affidavit.

At the site, they pitched tents and set up tables. They laid out PVC pipes, charcoal, sulfur, gasoline, string, cloth, and protective gear. As they began assembling the devices, the FBI moved in. Overhead, an FBI surveillance plane recorded the scene as agents took into custody four alleged members of the Turtle Island Liberation Front including Carroll and Page, along with Tina Lai and Dante Gaffield. (An attorney for Page declined to comment, and lawyers for Gaffield and Lai did not immediately respond.)

“Nonpartisan Incentive Structure”

Terrorism prosecutions built around confidential informants have long drawn criticism, particularly over the risk of entrapment.

For more than a decade, legal scholars have argued that while these cases often resemble classic government inducement, they rarely meet the legal standard for entrapment. Courts define predisposition so broadly that ideological sympathy or recorded rhetoric is treated as evidence of a preexisting willingness to commit violence — a framework that effectively shields government-manufactured plots from meaningful judicial scrutiny.

That concern surfaced starkly in a previous sting operation involving the so-called Newburgh Four, in which an aggressive and prolific FBI informant steered four poor Black men into a scheme to bomb synagogues and attack an Air Force base. Years later, a federal judge granted the men compassionate release, describing the case as an “FBI-orchestrated conspiracy.”

Because informants can be so instrumental in building cases, their use can be leveraged by authorities to focus resources on investigations with more political overtones.

At times, the right has criticized the political nature of some cases. Among them was the case in which the FBI encouraged a plot to kidnap Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer — a sting that the FBI’s Patel and

Bongino harshly criticized back when they spent their days attached to the microphones of right-wing podcasts.

“There is a nonpartisan incentive structure that has become overly reliant on these kinds of confidential human sources,” said Crowder.

Crowder knows better than most. In 2008, he and fellow activist David McKay were arrested and charged with plotting to use Molotov cocktails at the Republican National Convention in Saint Paul, Minnesota. Despite deciding not to follow through with the plan, both ultimately pleaded guilty, with Crowder sentenced to two years in prison and McKay to four.

The case against Crowder and McKay case hinged on the work of an FBI informant, Brandon Darby, who had been a prominent activist in anarchist circles in Texas and Louisiana. Crowder and McKay looked up to Darby, viewing him as a mentor and someone they hoped to impress or convince of their radical bona fides. In interviews over the years, they’ve alleged that Darby — who now works at Breitbart — was instrumental to their decision to cross the line from protest to discussing something more violent.

Part of the playbook, Crowder said, is for an informant to exploit their targets’ “righteous anger” — in the case of the Turtle Bay Liberation Front, rights violations in Palestine and ICE actions in Los Angeles. From there, authorities take advantage of the allege plotters’ political immaturity, walking hand in hand with them as they cross the line from legal dissent into illegal conspiracy.

The informant gets paid, the FBI gets a good headline that justifies their anti-terrorism budget, and the defendants are left to face the consequences, often without ever posing a real threat to public safety, Crowder said.

“On both sides you have a sort of momentum that develops,” Crowder said. “This ICE repression is crazy, and that feeds into a sort of hopelessness that drives a sort of nihilistic response that you see from people who have immature politics. And then that heartfelt but immature and irresponsible response plays into the incentive structure of the FBI.”

16 Dec - Holdover Life at Mendota

Please read the latest from Casey Goonan.

MORE:

The following ideas and opinions reflect the general consensus of the majority prisoners held in the FCI Mendota B2 Building. This is a continuation of my small zine, titled “Holdover Life at Mendota.”

Life in the FCI Mendota “holdover unit” is difficult and often challenging. Even though we are only allowed out of our cell 5 1/2 hours per week — no more than one hour on weekends, no more than 15 minutes (for a phone call) on weekend days — every day brings a new obstacle, a new drama, a new and supremely unnecessary interaction with a petty correctional officer. I honestly can complain for days on end.

There are very few items to choose from on the commissary, with a \$50 spending limit. We only order commissary once every two weeks. We run out of food items before the second week most of the time.

Although the kitchen serves us three meals a day and many days do a great job providing quality food, the portions are small and the trays almost always arrive cold. The last part is always due to the CO’s not passing out the food in a timely manner.

We barely have any items or options available to program with and keep busy. I average reading ten hours a day — terrible selection of books. I feel brain rot.

It's difficult to work out in the small cells, and our so-called "recreation time" is usually 6am or 7am. so, if you decide to work out any time later, you will not be able to shower until the next day. Oh, i should probably mention that you only have that single hour in the morning to shower between Mondays and Fridays; we are not permitted shower on the weekends.

Meanwhile, most of the C.O.'s sit around in their office half of the day and barely have to do anything. This is a convenient (although i imagine boring) unit for them to work. Most of them hate it here, and many times daily they project that disdain onto us inmates.

My least favorite aspect of this experience is how we do not get **any** outdoor time. None. Zilch.

Did i mention we receive terrible medical care and treatment for inmates with chronic or emergent health needs? With one phone call a day we are deeply isolated from the outside world. To add to the stressors, the mailroom absolutely sucks!

In the b2 Unit we are essentially treated as if we are in the SHU ("solitary confinement," aka "the hole" or more properly the "security housing unit"). Yet none of us are facing disciplinary infractions; many of us haven't even been designated. Some of us have been stuck here for over three months!

Here at FCI Mendota, the administration is **de facto** punishing us inmates in the holdover unit. The policies and living conditions are cruel and unusual. Its freezing cold. We suffer extremely unnecessary immobilization and deprivation of bodily autonomy. As a result, we also suffer long periods of time where we're held incommunicado from our loved ones on the outside.

Shit, I've heard the SHU inmates have certain perks that we are withheld in the holdover unit. For example, the SHU inmates may not be given television nor a phone call home. However, they do get a daily hour of **outdoor** time. We in the holdover unit only leave our cells for an hour each weekday morning, with **zero** outdoor time. Those days, our alleged "rec time" only allows for one 15 minutes phone call, because the phone system blocks you from making a follow-up call for a half hour duration. The remainder of the time we use to shower and gather ourselves for the next 23 hours of captivity.

When in cell, most of us have inadequate views of the television, and even when your cell has a better TV shot, we are not provided headphones nor allowed to purchase radios to hear what's on the silent, muted televisions. Instead, we struggle to read tiny subtitles that move so quick it's comical. From the cell i'm currently held in, my cellmate and i do not have a view of a TV at all.

In some ways we have it worse than SHU inmates, who at least breathe fresh air daily and have showers *inside* of the *cells*. Some even say they have a better commissary list in the SHU, although i can't vouch 100% for that claim.

To be a "holdover" inmate, means you are in the process of becoming designated (or in fact are already designated) by the BOP to be sent to a different, more long-term facility. Most of us, if not all at some point or another, were either just sentenced or brought here on a violation and awaiting release or transfer. Some inmates in this unit are "pretrial" and those inmates receive two hours of "rec time" every day. Even on weekends. I'm not exactly sure why we do not receive the same treatment as the "pretrial" inmates of the unit.

When you arrive as a new holdover inmate, the first thing the compound officers tell us is how we should expect 2 hours of recreation time outside of our cells. Federal law (look it up, i'm not lying) also mandates that inmates without any disciplinary infractions or write-ups must be given **at least** ten hours out of their cells a week. The reality is we spend 163 hours a week locked in cells. The excuse we are most often told, upon filing informal requests and grieving to staff is: "most of you will only be here for two to three weeks, then on a bus... you just gotta deal with it." I've been told that same response from C.O.'s from councilors,

and even from certain medical staff. The crude fact is that some of us have been here for three months! I am included in that category of “long-term holdover.”

We are being punished simply because we exist as “undesigned” or newly designated BOP inmates. No other reason.

At the current moment, there is no convincing reason why we are held in cells this long, besides the fact that it is easier this way for the staff. During the time of this writing, there are only 14 inmates in this entire 64 cell building. We are split up into four “rec” groups: Group A, Group B, and two pretrial groups. None of this has to be this way. There are only **four** small groups of people; the largest of which has only six members. It’s absurd. Most of the day there are no inmates on the rec floor at all.

18 Dec - Inside DoJ’s controversial prosecution of a Texas ‘antifa cell’ charged with terrorism

DoJ says a group of protesters at an ICE detention center was part of a terror cell; legal experts say case is an effort to crack down on leftwing groups and deter protesters

MORE:

by Sam Levine (*The Guardian*)

After the assassination of Charlie Kirk in September, Donald Trump and others pledged a no-holds barred crackdown on leftwing activists.

“We have radical left lunatics out there and we just have to beat the hell out of them,” Trump said after Kirk’s shooting. Top White House officials, including JD Vance and Stephen Miller, repeatedly publicly vowed that a crackdown was coming. In particular, the government focused on “antifa,” which is short for antifascist, and is not an organization but rather an ideology that broadly describes a variety of left-leaning beliefs.

About a month later, the administration had its first trophy. The justice department announced it was bringing terrorism charges against two people in Texas who were part of a “North Texas antifa cell”. Prosecutors said the cell had planned an attack at ICE’s Prairieland detention facility and ended with two correctional officers being shot at and a police officer sustaining a non-fatal gunshot wound. Ultimately, 18 people were charged – some donning all black gear, masks and radios – and the government said they had carefully plotted the attack.

It was the first time the government had ever filed terrorism charges against antifa. In total, 15 people were charged with providing material support for terrorism. They also face state charges as well as numerous other federal charges relating to rioting, carrying an explosive, firearms, and attempted murder of a federal employee.

The US attorney in Texas’s northern district appeared on Fox News the next day and alleged that people in the supposed cell “want to overthrow the United States government”.

“As @POTUS has made clear, Antifa is a left-wing terrorist organization. They will be prosecuted as such,” US attorney general Pam Bondi tweeted the day the charges were announced in October.

There is no doubt a police officer was shot at the protest. Prosecutors have also brought charges against people they say helped the alleged shooter escape. But the case has drawn considerable alarm because of the way that prosecutors have sought to create a criminal enterprise – a “North Texas antifa cell” – among a group of demonstrators who were uninvolved in the shooting. Legal experts say it is a thinly veiled effort to crack down on leftwing groups and deter protesters. Six defendants have already pleaded guilty to providing material support to terrorists.

“It should concern everyone else in the country, because their community, their circles, might be next,” said Xavier de Janon, who is the director of mass defense at the National Lawyers Guild and has been closely following the case. “This precedent could result in people facing terrorism charges for doing very simple mainstream activism.”

The case is more complex than Trump officials have let on, according to a Guardian review of court records and interviews with defense lawyers and family members. The evidence so far raises considerable questions about whether those charged believed they were going to a protest that would result in violence or destruction of federal property. Family members and lawyers for several of those charged said in interviews the defendants had nothing to do with antifa. And experts say the terrorism charges the government has filed have nothing to do with the ideology of the defendants.

Perhaps most significant in the Texas case is the way that prosecutors have sought to create a criminal enterprise – a “North Texas antifa cell” – among a group of demonstrators, some of whom say they did not know each other and met for the first time at the protest. Prosecutors have pointed to leftwing zines and flyers seized from the protesters, their use of the encrypted messaging app Signal, all-black clothing worn at the protest, and general discussion of firearms to argue that those at the protest were part of a terror cell.

As Donald Trump and his allies look to crack down on leftwing groups, the provision may offer a new cudgel for the Trump administration to go after political opponents.

“I do think there is reason to be concerned that the administration is trying to find ways to become that aggressive with its prosecutions, which would really be abandoning first amendment principles,” said Francesca Laguardia, a professor at Montclair State University who studies terrorism prosecutions.

“The novelty is not really a new use of an old statute, but more actively thinking to use the statute at all,” she added. “The novelty allows for prosecutions of people who are not associated with established terrorist organizations.”

A spokesperson for the US attorney’s office for the northern district of Texas, which is handling the case, declined to comment. A justice department spokesperson did not return a request for comment.

Amber Lowrey wasn’t surprised when she got a call on 5 July and found out her sister Savanna Batten had been arrested.

She knew Batten had planned to go to a protest the night before at a local ICE facility. Batten had been going to protests for years and had been arrested before “for blocking doors and things like that”, Lowrey said. Her sister loved animals, wasn’t violent, didn’t like guns, and would barely say a curse word. So whatever Batten had been arrested for, Lowrey figured it couldn’t be too serious. But as the day went on, Lowrey began to see news stories about the protest. A police officer had been shot. She began to worry. “Oh, no, Savanna what have you gotten yourself into?” she thought.

In July, Batten was one of about a dozen people federally charged with attempted murder of a federal officer and discharging a firearm in connection with a crime of violence. Little happened in the case in the weeks after.

A few months later, after Kirk’s death, the government released a new indictment against Batten and several of the other activists who were charged. Now, they accused Batten of being part of a “North Texas antifa cell” and brought new terrorism charges against the activists.

Amber noticed the justice department began highlighting antifa – something she said her sister had nothing to do with – on social media.

“The charges the Grand Jury has leveled against these defendants, including material support for terrorists, address the vicious attack perpetrated by an anti-ICE, anti-law enforcement, anti-government, anarchist group,” Nancy Larson, the acting US attorney for the northern district of Texas, said in a November statement. “We are firm in our resolve to protect our law enforcement officers and federal facilities against organized domestic terrorist cells.”

“We were just like ‘wait a minute, what is going on here?’” Lowrey said. “I promise you there is no antifa cell.

“I thought at first it’s a misunderstanding,” she said.

On 4 July, Batten drove to Prairieland detention facility, about 30 minutes south from her home in Fort Worth, with two friends, according to court documents. The plan was to stage a noise demonstration, setting off fireworks in solidarity with immigrants detained inside. By the time she got there, about half a dozen other protesters had already arrived. Among the protesters were 11 firearms, prosecutors would later say.

A little after 10.30pm, the protesters began setting off fireworks, according to court documents. Some of the protesters began spray-painting a guard booth and vehicles in the parking lot, damaged the tires on a government van and broke a security camera, according to a plea agreement in one case. Just before 11pm local police arrived on the scene as two unarmed correctional officers attempted to talk to the protesters, according to the criminal complaint filed earlier this year.

What happened next is not exactly clear. Prosecutors say one of the protesters ran towards Benjamin Song, a local activist who prosecutors say was the leader of the group. Song allegedly yelled “get to the rifles”, and began shooting at the officers with an AR-15 rifle that had a modified binary trigger, which allowed him to fire off more rounds quickly. An Alvarado police officer was shot in the neck and would later recover.

Lowrey said Batten wasn’t close to the shooting when it happened. Prosecutors say she was arrested later at an intersection nearby with six others. “They were dressed in black, military-style clothing, some had on body armor, some were covered in mud, some were armed, some had radios,” prosecutors said in court papers.

Zachary Evetts, another protester, was arrested around 2am walking along the side of the road and police say they found him with a black balaclava mask, safety goggles and tactical gloves. Meagan Morris, who told KERA she played on her Nintendo Switch while the protest took place, was arrested in her car after she drove away when gunshots started. Police said they found two guns, a ballistic helmet, a loaded gun magazine, a hand-held radio and two bulletproof vests in the car.

Prosecutors also may focus on the all-black gear many of the protesters wore in an effort to prove the material support for terrorism charge. Some of the protesters who have pleaded guilty have stipulated to prosecutors they dressed in all black knowing it would make it more difficult for police to arrest them for damaging government property.

The opening paragraphs of the indictment lay out the government’s description of what antifa is, describing it as “a militant enterprise made up of networks of individuals and small groups primarily ascribing to a revolutionary anarchist or autonomous Marxist ideology, which explicitly calls for overthrow of the United States government, law enforcement authorities, and systems of law”, prosecutors wrote.

But whether or not the defendants were part of a larger group is not relevant to the terrorism charge they face, experts said. In order to prove someone is guilty of material support to terrorists, prosecutors must simply show that they intended to commit one of several specific crimes.

“The actual language of the statute does not require a nexus to terrorism or a terrorist organization,” Laguardia said. “Clearly they’re going to use this case in terms of communication with the public to build out this idea that antifa has become a terrorist organization.”

In this case, prosecutors allege the protesters provided material support for three crimes of terrorism: attempting to destroy government property by using an explosive, destroying government property in excess of \$1,000 and attempting to kill an employee of the United States.

The key to the case is likely to be whether the participants intended to commit or assist those crimes. In court documents, for example, prosecutors have focused on the fact that the participants wore all black and covered their faces, an intentional effort to conceal their identities from law enforcement.

“Is some discussion of a target location going to be sufficient? Or discussion of a weapons cache, is that going to be sufficient?” said Thomas Brzozowski, who worked as counsel for domestic terrorism in the justice department’s national security division. “That’s the \$50,000 question.”

They have also highlighted that two of the protesters went to the ICE facility earlier in the day and sent pictures of a security camera and details about the gate surrounding the facility.

Patrick McLain, a lawyer for Evetts – one of the people alleged to have done reconnaissance at the site – said the scouting was done for a different reason.

“He went to a site to see what it is because they were concerned about safety,” he said. “What is this place like? None of them had been there.” He similarly said they wore all black for safety reasons. “Look how protesters are being treated across the country by federal agents.” He added that his client was not part of any so-called antifa cell.

Those who know the defendants say there was no intent to commit violence that night. Lydia Koza, 32, whose wife Autumn Hill, 30, was arrested after the protest, was home when a few protesters gathered at their home before heading to Prairieland. Prosecutors said their house was a staging ground to gather guns and other gear. Koza and Hill, like several of the people arrested, are transgender.

“My understanding is that they were going to go and try to make some noise to let people in Prairieland detention center know they had not been forgotten,” she said. “I am supremely confident no violence was planned at this event.” Shortly before going out, she gave her number to a few of the people who had gathered to call in case they were arrested. She described her and her housemates as “a bunch of fucking nerds”.

Asked why the protesters were carrying guns if there was no intention of violence, Koza speculated they were for self-defense.

“A lot of the time rightwing counter-protesters will try to show up at leftist protests to counter protests. And a lot of the time the rightwing counter-protesters will be armed,” she said. “My understanding is basically that they were going to leave the guns in the car or in some place where they could get them, but they would not be carrying the guns per se,” she said.

Prosecutors have painted the protest in a vastly different light, portraying the demonstrators – some of whom had never met each other – as far-left extremists who planned violence on the evening of 4 July. They have pointed to two different group chats on Signal, the encrypted messaging platform, where they say the activists used aliases and auto-deleted messages as they planned the event.

In one of those chats, titled “4th of July party!”, prosecutors say a group of six of the activists scouted out the detention facility in the days leading up to the protest, mapping out the perimeter, doorbell cameras nearby and the closest police station. According to the indictment, Maricela Rueda, one of the activists in

the chat, asked if they would be bringing guns to the protest, expressing concern that doing so “might make the situation more hot”. Song allegedly replied that having a rifle would intimidate law enforcement since “cops are not trained or equipped for more than one rifle, so it tends to make them back off”.

Song posted a flyer for the protest in a larger activist chat describing the protest as a noise demonstration and asked those in the group to only share it with “trusted folks”. The night of 3 July, Song went to the house where Hill and Morris lived to review the gear they were going to bring to the protest. Hill asked Song if he would be bringing guns to the protest, and Song said he would because he didn’t intend to go to jail, according to the indictment. He repeated that several times over the course of the night, prosecutors say, “putting everyone there on notice of his intent to shoot at police rather than be arrested”.

Koza was there that night, and said that while she didn’t hear all of the conversations that night, she didn’t recall Song making that comment. She also rejected the characterization that the remark signaled an intent to shoot police and believed Song didn’t intend to shoot police.

“I don’t think this individual had any intention of shooting at cops,” she said. “I think that it was much more of a ‘don’t get shot yourself’.”

In a statement of facts accompanying a guilty plea last month, Seth Sikes, another protester who pleaded guilty to providing material support to terrorists, told prosecutors that Song’s role was to use his rifle to intimidate law enforcement so that the protesters could escape. Two other defendants, who also pleaded guilty to providing material support to terrorists, told prosecutors Song’s role was to alert the protesters to police.

Lowrey said that in the days after Savanna was arrested, she spoke with her on the phone in jail and that her sister didn’t even know there had been a shooting.

“She just kept saying, ‘No, something’s wrong. This is not what happened. Let’s try to be calm and let everything shake out’ and she was very much like ‘This is not a big deal,’” Lowrey said. McLain, Evetts’s lawyer, also said there was no intention of violence.

Prosecutors also allege the use of Signal itself is suspicious because it allowed those who participated in the protest “to hide their involvement in illegal conduct”. But both Koza and Lowrey said that is a gross overreading of using Signal, which is now fairly widely used amid broader concerns about government surveillance. Earlier this year, it was revealed that the defense secretary, Pete Hegseth, and other top government officials used the app to communicate.

“I’m a 42-year-old mom, about as strait-laced as they come and I use Signal,” Lowrey said.

Koza said she and Hill use Signal for everyday things like grocery lists and there wasn’t a nefarious reason many people in their group chats didn’t use their real names. “That’s just what you do when you’re on a group chat with your friends, you make up goofy nicknames that you call each other,” she said. Hill’s moniker on Signal was “not beating the little creature allegations”, which Koza said was an inside joke of sorts that referenced how those who knew her thought she was adorable.

Prosecutors have also pointed to materials seized to try to paint the group as a terror organization. The original indictment, from July, included a picture of a flag obtained at the scene that says “resist fascism, fight oligarchy” with a fist reaching upwards. Prosecutors also point out in the indictment that Batten and two of the people she arrived with were involved in printing “insurrectionary materials called ‘zines’”. Another defendant, Daniel Sanchez-Estrada, wasn’t at the attack. But authorities arrested him afterwards for moving a box of zines after one of the protesters called him from jail. He was charged with conspiracy to conceal documents and corruptly concealing a document or record.

After her initial reaction to Batten's arrest, Lowrey has since learned more about the case and become more convinced in the wrongness of her sister's prosecution. "They just want to make an example of people and silence anyone who, you know, opposes the government. They want to silence dissent, criminalize dissent, really. And that is why I think they're doing it," she said.

When she realized Batten would be in jail for a while, she went to her apartment with her mom to tidy things up. In the microwave, she found a cherry cobbler, apparently baked by Batten that day for her and her friends to eat that evening when they returned from the protest. It was covered in mold.

"She has 10 hermit crabs, she has a cat – you're asking me to believe she walked out of her apartment and abandoned her animals that she probably loved more than her own life and she baked a cherry cobbler," she said. "None of this says I'm walking out into what is essentially a suicide mission."

19 Dec - Update from Xinachtli Freedom Campaign

Xinachtli 's support crew want to share some urgent updates and asks.

MORE:

Our pressure campaign is working. The state of Texas is on the back foot and scrambling, giving us a crucial window to push for his release. Our ability to bring him home hinges on increasing public pressure over the next few days.

We have two asks for those who are able to support:

1. Mobilize your members to sign up for phone zap slots for at least 1-2 days over the next couple of weeks. They are counting on the holiday season to slow us down but we may be on the brink of a major win. Here is the link: **bit.ly/xphoneblast**

2. Join us for an emergency meeting on Friday at 5:00 PM CST to discuss this major push to bring Xinachtli home, including planning around his potential release. If you can attend let us know and we will send you the meeting link! **Xinachtlifreedomcampaign@protonmail.com**

Please let us know your capacity to support with these ask. Everything we've achieved so far has only been possible because of your support and we are truly grateful! Xinachtli Freedom Campaign Instagram is the best place for updates <**[instagram.com/p/DSiIGNAjRj](https://www.instagram.com/p/DSiIGNAjRj)**>.

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

WHAT: Noise Demo

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

WHERE: Metropolitan Detention Center (MDC, the federal prison in Brooklyn); 29th Street between 2nd and 3rd Avenues, Brooklyn, New York 11232 (D/N/R to 36th Street or R to 25th Street).

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 Detention Center (MDC) in Sunset Park, Brooklyn. Come, not to appeal to authority, speak truth to power, or any other contrivance, but rather to stand with comrades, at a safe distance, 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.