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MINNEAPOLIS TO FEDS: “GET THE FUCK OUT”

HOW PEOPLE IN THE TWIN CITIES
RESPONDED TO AN ICE RAID

most positive aspect of today's events was how quickly so many people were able to mobilize, forcing the feds to turn tail and run. Here's hoping we never have to deal with this again—or that, if we do, we come back twice as hard.

—An antagonist in the back of the crowd

members and candidates for the upcoming Minneapolis mayoral election were present today at Lake and Bloomington, it is clear that their goal was not to chase off the federal agencies, but to de-escalate tensions. These politicians told people to go home, to stop blocking the streets; left-wing activist groups did the same thing. This is a counterinsurgency strategy in which they function as self-appointed liaisons between law enforcement and the public. Never trust a politician, whether in a suit or holding a megaphone.

- It's worth thinking through how best to respond in a situation like this. Why were we shutting down Bloomington and Lake Street where the raid took place when the feds had already left? Would it have made more sense to march to the nearest police precinct? Perhaps to Mayor Frey's residence? To the federal building in downtown Minneapolis? If we had succeeded in shutting down the intersection and the crowd there continued gathering and growing in size, what should we have done next? If police had shown up to disperse us, how would we respond? In some cases, it may make more sense to regroup, strategize, and mobilize to a target that offers more potential to gain momentum and escalate the situation. Shutting down an intersection didn't draw the full participation of the crowd and we should be asking ourselves why that was.

In short, it was a confusing and harrowing day involving upsetting events but also moments of inspiration and potential. A raid similar to this one just took place in San Diego, California with an almost identical response. Federal agents arrived, conducted their operation, miscalculated how the crowd would react, escalated with crowd control munitions (in that case, flash-bang grenades), then retreated when those measures had the opposite of their intended effect.

The most powerful weapon the authorities wield against us is fear, intensified by the fog of war and the confusion of having to process so much unverified information at once. Whatever happens, we should remain calm, analyze what is happening, verify information that is circulating, assess the situation, and tailor our response to it. We have to resist efforts to provoke us, lest we play into their hands. At the same time, the

An array of federal agencies attempted to carry out a coordinated raid in Minneapolis on the morning of Tuesday, June 3, precipitating an angry response. Locals surrounded the federal officers and police, chanting "Get the fuck out!" and "Whose streets? Our streets!" Word of mouth traveled quickly in the dense neighborhood, drawing a crowd and precipitating confrontations in which federal agents shoved people and attacked them with chemical weapons. Nonetheless, the federal agents ultimately retreated from the scene.

This comes on the heels of a raid in San Diego in which Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers and Homeland Security Investigations agents shot flash-bang grenades at an angry crowd. All around the country, thanks in part to rapid response networks and community organizing, resistance to ICE is ramping up.

We commend those who stood up to police and federal agents in Minneapolis. Here, we share some brief strategic remarks on these raids and how to resist them, followed by two firsthand accounts of the events of June 3.

On X/Twitter, a platform owned by a Sieg-Heiling fascist billionaire, the Minneapolis Police Department claimed that

MPD was NOT involved in any immigration enforcement activities today, nor were we given advance notice of any such operation... MPD responded to a request to assist with crowd control and to help ensure public safety. Officers supported federal law enforcement in safely departing the area.

Maybe—and maybe not. We can hardly take it for granted that Minneapolis police will be honest with us. Under a federal government controlled by autocrats who have made mendacity a signature element of their political strategy, there is less and less cause to believe anything from any representative of the state.

Similarly, Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey denied that the raid was

aimed at detaining immigrants, claiming instead that it was “related to a criminal search warrant for drugs and money laundering.”

Maybe—and maybe not. Federal agents could be concealing their real objectives from Frey and other local officials, or Frey could be lying to us. Considering that the federal government has reassigned a massive number of federal agents from a variety of agencies to ICE operations in hopes of increasing the pace of deportations, it would be unusual indeed if the operation in Minneapolis yesterday involved several ICE agents on a mission that had nothing whatsoever to do with immigration.

There is no easy way to learn the truth—and in any case, it does not really matter. Owing to widespread anger about ICE operations, many of which have clearly been calculated to be as brutal as possible with the intention of terrorizing the public, and to the way that the gratuitous cruelty of Donald Trump’s administration has delegitimized the government in the public eye, more and more people feel tremendous urgency about resisting ICE raids. This is going to make it increasingly difficult for police and federal agencies to carry out operations of any kind, whether or not they happen to be trying to kidnap immigrants at a particular time.

And that is as it should be. ICE, US Border Patrol, the Department of Homeland Security, the Federal Bureau of Investigations, and other federal agencies all collaborate and share tasks. Alongside local police departments and the court system, all of these institutions comprise a single apparatus of repression. Until local police begin to actively resist ICE agents themselves, any distinctions between the two remain purely academic. When a sheriff or local cop arrests an immigrant, ICE agents can snatch them directly from jail or a court appearance. The structural white supremacist violence that drove people to revolt repeatedly against the police between 2009 and 2020 has not diminished at all.

Hours after the incident, ICE Homeland Security Investigations St. Paul Special Agent in Charge Jamie Holt released a statement:

Federal investigators conducted a groundbreaking criminal operation today—Minnesota’s first under the Homeland Security Task Force (HSTF) umbrella—marking a new chapter in how we confront complex, multidimensional threats. From drug smuggling to criminal labor trafficking, this operation showcases the breadth of our collective missions and the strength of a united front. This HSI led investigation wouldn’t have been possible without the extraordinary collaboration of our state

eventually released. Videos posted to social media show that a couple projectiles were thrown at the retreating feds, but nothing sustained, and none of them hit the intended targets. We heard a rumor of police using an irritant dispersal agent or chemical weapons, and this was eventually confirmed: federal agents apparently shot pepper balls at the crowd that was chasing them away.

A few moments after I arrived, a small group of people decided to attempt to block the intersection of Bloomington Avenue and Lake Street where the raid had taken place. A small group of leftist activists from groups like Freedom Road Socialist Organization and Party for Socialism and Liberation was present, but not in a presence large enough to direct the crowd or control the situation. There was really no direction coming from anyone, whether autonomous, anti-authoritarian, anarchist, or Marxist-Leninist.

Without clear information or motivation, the crowd that wanted to block the intersection was unable to fully commit. In the end, a situation developed in which a dozen people were standing in the middle of the intersection while public transit supervisors directed city buses around the “blockade.” This nonetheless produced a traffic jam.

The impulse to shut down the intersection was definitely a positive move from the crowd. It had some potential. But without enough momentum, it never took off.

Preliminary conclusions:

- We need more rapid response Signal loops, fewer social media rumors. It is important to verify information and confirm from multiple sources.
- Get eyes on the police and cameras pointed at them. These federal agents seem to be afraid of public backlash; it was the antagonism of the crowd telling them to leave and the rapid growth of that crowd that eventually impelled the police to retreat and abandon their operations. Normally, I would tell people to resist the urge to bring their phones to an action, but in this particular case, I think that it is vital to collect hard evidence of which agencies are operating, what equipment they are using, what the police are doing.
- The role of local politicians and activist groups is generally to demobilize people. While progressive City Council

Account II: The Response

It was a rainy day in Minneapolis. There was an air quality warning for wildfire smoke up north in Canada. Then a text arrived on a Signal loop:

Fed raid underway, Homeland Security sighted at 29th and Bloomington.

The fog of war kicked in immediately. Conflicting reports. Confusion. Eventually, we received pictures of a Bearcat armored vehicle marked “Homeland Security Investigations” and camouflage-clad SWAT officers in military garb, fully kitted out with assault rifles, plate carriers, and helmets. ICE badges were spotted on some of the officers and soon it was confirmed: Homeland Security Investigations, ICE, and other federal agencies were conducting some kind of raid on Cuatros Milpas on Bloomington and Lake in south Minneapolis.

This raid took place four years to the day after a federal Justice Department task force conducted a raid on a parking garage in the south Minneapolis neighborhood of Uptown, shooting and killing Winston Smith.

A crowd quickly formed outside the restaurant, including trained observers from immigrants’ rights legal activist groups and independent media—and also local politicians² intent on de-escalating the situation. The federal agents were assisted by Hennepin County Sheriffs Officers and Minneapolis Police Department officers, despite verbal assurances from the city government that Minneapolis is a “sanctuary city” and will not assist in federal immigration enforcement operations or deportation operations. MPD and HCSO eventually left the scene, leaving the federal agencies on their own to deal with the growing angry and confused crowd—confusion being the word of the day.

By the time I arrived, the federal agents had already left, chased away by the angry crowd. One person had apparently been detained but

² Among other politicians, Jason Chavez from the Ninth Ward, Council Vice-President Aisha Chughtai from the Tenth Ward, and mayoral candidates DeWayne Davis and Jazz Hampton were seen among the crowd. Their presence surely contributed to demobilizing the response to the federal raid. Jazz Hampton is on video running arms outstretched towards a person who had just thrown an empty trash can, attempting to squelch resistance; Jason Chavez posted a message trying to get people to leave the streets.

partners and federal HSTF partners, including the U.S. Attorney’s Office, FBI, IRS-CI, DEA, ERO, ATF, USMS, DSS, U.S. Border Patrol, U.S. Coast Guard, TSA and local law enforcement. Together, we are safeguarding communities, protecting national security, and setting a new standard of joint enforcement efforts.

If this statement had appeared concurrently with the morning’s events, it might have been evidence that the operation was intended as a provocation, or to test the waters. However, the statement appeared *after* people chased off the federal agents and police, so it seems more likely that it was calculated to moderate the blowback from the rout that they experienced at the hands of the public. Surely, the ideal scenario for federal agents would be able to conduct operations like this without ever having to explain themselves to the public, accustoming us to doing nothing in the face of such raids.

Some liberals have spread a fearful narrative to the effect that the Trump administration is trying to provoke an uprising that they can crush by introducing martial law. But the chaos in Minneapolis on June 3 looks more like the consequence of disorganization and incompetence than shrewd provocation. It is a mistake to ascribe calculated strategy to a government that sets policy according to the whims of an elderly megalomaniac. For now, at least, it is by no means clear what the outcome of a large-scale confrontation would be; such a situation might finally force politicians who claim not to support Trump’s policies to actually break with them.

If a clash is inevitable, it would be better if it happens sooner. The longer that the Trump administration holds power, the more they will consolidate control of the federal apparatus. They began by installing their own leadership at the top of federal agencies, but they are still in the process of purging and replacing the rank and file.

There are worse scenarios than outright confrontation. If no one responds to state mercenaries in military gear kidnapping people off the streets, if we accept everything passively, there is no limit to how much violence the administration will carry out against a wider and wider range of targets. The important thing is not to avoid confrontation, then, but to be thoughtful, strategic, coordinated, prepared.

Rather than waiting for ICE to strike and then attempting to respond, which leaves us always scrambling to catch up, it might be better to take

the initiative, so as to determine the time and place of encounters with our adversaries. Demonstrators have done this before—for example, by establishing blockades at ICE facilities in 2018. Failing that, protesters could popularize a template for how to respond to raids after the fact, the way that the movement against white supremacy and police responded to police murders. As a minimum program, creating lasting disruption wherever a raid occurs would be a way to raise awareness about the raids, impose consequences for them, and discourage local authorities from tolerating raids in their jurisdictions.

To learn more about what you can do to resist ICE attacks on your community, you could begin here¹. One of the simplest things you can do is to start an announcements-only group on the messaging app Signal and invite a large number of people of good conscience to sign up to it, so that you can immediately communicate information to them in the event of an ICE operation in your community.

Account I: The Raid

Around 10:15 am, a group of federal law enforcement vehicles was spotted near Lake Street and Bloomington Avenue. I arrived at the scene at 11:00 am. A large multi-agency task force was conducting a raid at the taqueria Las Cuatro Milpas. Present were masked and heavily armed agents from at least Homeland Security Investigations (a part of Immigration and Customs Enforcement), the Department of the Treasury, the Drug Enforcement Agency, the Federal Bureau of Investigations, and the Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms. Hennepin County Sheriffs were doing traffic control. Minneapolis police were not initially present.

An armored vehicle was pulled up outside the taqueria. A small crowd of onlookers was already present, and grew over time. Shortly after I arrived, Minneapolis Police Department officers arrived and conferred with the feds. Overhearing their conversation, it did seem possible that they were not informed of the operation in advance. The feds told them that the operation was “not immigration.”

I heard a number of conflicting descriptions of what the raid was about, but the most consistent was that it was a search warrant related to a human trafficking investigation being served. My own assessment

is that this was a pretext to conduct a large paramilitary operation in an immigrant neighborhood. What the exact intention of this operation was is not clear to me, however. Near 11:30 am, the armored vehicles and a number of the agents departed and the swelling crowd crossed from the other side of the street up to the front of the business where a number of federal agents and MPD officers remained inside and immediately outside of the business. Tensions were increasing and the crowd refused to cross back across the street when the agents instructed them to.

At this point, MPD seemed to decide that they did not want to be present, and departed. Some of the crowd moved to the back alley of the business, where federal agents were congregating. Additional federal agents arrived from north on Bloomington Avenue. Federal agents attempted to move a van from the back valley; the crowd impeded them. They began violently shoving individuals in the crowd. The scene became very chaotic and confused. Officers violently detained one individual at this point, who was later released. Multiple groups attempted to impede the progress of federal vehicles as they attempted to leave north on Bloomington and west on lake with federal agents shoving the crowds out of the way. This is when MPD arrived on the scene in significant numbers.

On a few occasions, the federal agents and Hennepin County Sheriffs Officers deployed pepper-ball munitions and pepper spray. I did not see MPD do so. A woman fainted and fell on Bloomington and was later transported to the hospital. I didn’t see the exact circumstances that led to that. As the bulk of the feds were working away from the scene, [MPD police chief Brian] O’Hara arrived. After the federal agents extricated themselves, MPD rapidly left as well, leaving the crowd milling about in a stunned state. After accounting for my people as best I could, I departed at 1:20 pm. I did not see anyone from the business detained and I did not see anyone in custody taken from the scene.

My working assumption is that this was a pretext to launch a large militarized display of force on Lake Street. I’m unsure if they understood how provocative the location was or whether they anticipated the degree of resistance they encountered. They were not prepared to carry out a large number of arrests or to do effective crowd control and frankly put themselves in a vulnerable situation. I also can’t say how aware MPD was of the operation. They did not seem like they were prepared to do crowd control either. In conclusion, it was a mess.

—Anonymous