



DEFENDING RIGHTS & DISSENT DEMANDS FEDERAL INVESTIGATION INTO SHOOTING OF ANTI-FASCIST ACTIVIST BY FEDERAL TASK FORCE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Defending Rights & Dissent demands a full, transparent investigation into the shooting of Michael Reinoehl by a federal fugitive task force. Reinoehl was identified as an "antif-fascist" activist. He was wanted by police for the second-degree murder of a Patriot Prayer member that took place during dueling protests in Portland, Oregon. Like all people accused of a crime, he had the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty. His killing has been publicly praised by Donald Trump. A New York Times investigation, based in part on interviews with 22 witnesses, raises questions about whether law enforcement made any attempts to arrest Reinoehl or opened fire immediately upon arrival without identifying themselves. One witness told the New York Times that at first he did not realize it was a police shooting and thought it was a drug hit.

The serious discrepancies amongst police statements and disturbing eye witness accounts are enough to warrant a serious investigation. However, the matter has been confounded by the public comments of Donald Trump and other federal officials. One hour before the shooting, Trump took to twitter to lament that Reinoehl, who had an outstanding warrant for his arrest, had not yet been apprehend by the police. After the shooting, Trump made the claim that he had personally sent the US Marshals, a claim the US Marshals Service has denied. He has also stated his tweets caused law enforcement to act. Trump has repeatedly praised the shooting. Attorney General William Barr has weighed in saying, "streets of our cities are safer with this violent agitator removed."

The most recent and disturbing comments by Trump came during a rally yesterday afternoon. To the cheers of the crowd, Trump boasted, ""They knew who he was. They didn't want to arrest him, and 15 minutes — that ended." It is unclear if "they didn't want to arrest him" refers to Trump's claims that local officials' unwillingness to handle the matter and the need for federal intervention or the task force members who shot and killed Reionehl. Many are interpreting the comments as an admission that the task force members approached the suspect with the intent to kill, not arrest him. Rightly or wrongly, it demonstrates the severe lack of confidence many Americans have that federal law enforcement can treat perceived political opponents of Trump fairly. This highlights the urgent need for a transparent investigation.

The task force members who approached Reinoehl included US Marshals, Pierce County Sheriff Deputies, Lakewood Police, and Washington Department of Corrections Officers.

The Thurston County Sheriff's Department is investigating the shooting locally. But a federal level investigation is needed, one that takes place outside the US Marshals Service and is capable of reviewing not just the shooting itself, but what, if any, political influence was exerted on the Marshals Service.

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Defending Rights & Dissent fights to fulfill the promise of the Bill of Rights for everyone. DRAD was created in 2015 out of the merger of two envelope-pushing organizations: the Bill of Rights Defense Committee (BORDC) and the Defending Dissent Foundation (DDF). BORDC was founded in 2001, following the introduction of the PATRIOT Act, and coordinated the successful passage of resolutions opposing government spying in over 400 cities and towns across the country, as well as eight states, reflecting a transpartisan populist consensus in favor of liberty and privacy. DDF was founded in 1960 to fight the McCarthy-era witch hunt that targeted law-abiding Americans on the basis of their political beliefs.