



Leader of Militia Helping to Secure Border Arrested by FBI on Gun Charges

On April 20, FBI agents arrested Larry Mitchell Hopkins, also known as Johnny Horton, Jr., the commander of a private militia group called the United Constitutional Patriots, on a federal complaint charging him with being a felon in possession of firearms and ammunition. Hopkins/Horton was arrested in Sunland Park, New Mexico.

The FBI's Albuquerque office tweeted two statements on April 20, the first announcing the arrest of Hopkins, and another stating that Hopkins/Horton is expected to have an initial appearance in U.S. District Court in Las Cruces on April 22.

New Mexico Attorney General Hector Balderas released a statement in response to the arrest, which said in part, "This is a dangerous felon who should not have weapons around children and families." Balderas added, "The arrest by the FBI indicates clearly that the rule of law should be in the hand of trained law enforcement officials, not armed vigilantes."

CNN reported that during the week prior to the arrest of Hopkins, videos posted online purported to show migrants being detained by the United Constitutional Patriots before the militia turned them over to U.S. Border Patrol.

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The videos prompted an April 18 letter from the ACLU of New Mexico to the state's Democratic Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham and Attorney General Balderas. The letter stated, in part:

Two nights ago, on April 16, 2019, an armed fascist militia organization describing itself as the United Constitutional Patriots arrested nearly three hundred people seeking safety in the United States, including young children, near Sunland Park, New Mexico. Other videos appear to show arrests in the past few hours. The vigilante members of the organization, including Jim Benvie, who posted videos and photographs of the unlawful arrests to social media, are not police or law enforcement and they have no authority under New Mexico or federal law to detain or arrest migrants in the United States. Their actions undermine the legitimate efforts of our state's law enforcement officials to keep New Mexico families safe and they erode community trust.

The Trump administration's vile racism has emboldened white nationalists and fascists to flagrantly violate the law. This has no place in our state: we cannot allow racist and armed vigilantes to kidnap and detain people seeking asylum. We urge you to immediately investigate this atrocious and unlawful conduct.

The ACLU's use of emotionally charged buzz words such as "vile racism," "white nationalists,"





Written by [Warren Mass](#) on April 22, 2019

“vigilante,” and “fascists” should have signaled that their complaint was not impartial, but it nevertheless seemed to have at least some influence on the timing of Hopkins’ arrest, which came just two days afterwards.

A March 21 report from ABC’s El Paso affiliate KVIA noted that the United Constitutional Patriots group “has set up camp near the border fence for nearly a month” — which would have been in February.

Therefore, no arrests were made on Hopkins or any other member of the group for over two months, yet just two days after the ACLU sent a letter to the governor and attorney general of New Mexico, the FBI swooped in and arrested Hopkins. The timing seems suspiciously odd.



Image: screenshot from [YouTube video](#)

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