



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on May 24, 2013

Homeland Security “Police” Monitored Tea Party IRS Protests

Agents from the Department of Homeland Security posing as national “police” were deployed across the country this week to monitor and intimidate Tea Party activists, who were peacefully protesting the Obama administration and its [abuse of the IRS to target conservative groups](#). The [apparently unlawful](#) spying and bullying has drawn outrage from analysts, experts, and commentators from across the political spectrum worried that [the federal government is going off the rails](#).



From California to Florida and everywhere in between, armed DHS functionaries — part of the so-called “Federal Protective Service” (FPS) — intimidated and spied on peaceful activists, according to protesters in attendance. [News reports](#) were filled with [pictures](#) and videos of large Homeland Security trucks that said “police” in giant letters, along with armed DHS personnel dressed in “police” outfits. At a rally in Los Angeles, a DHS helicopter was even [spotted flying overhead](#) as federal “police” ordered protesters to get off of government property.

More than a few attendees at the rallies expressed fears about being spied on by authorities in the future — or even being targeted by the IRS. Some analysts said the federal show of force was probably an effort by the administration to intimidate Americans into remaining silent, while others [speculated](#) that the U.S. government was hoping to provoke a reaction out of the protesters that could be used to demonize activists concerned about lawless federal activities.

Among the most serious concerns cited by critics — aside from federal spying and intimidation of citizens exercising rights guaranteed under the First Amendment — were the giant letters reading “police” emblazoned on DHS vehicles and personnel. Of course, the Constitution does not grant the U.S. government any power to establish a national police force or anything even remotely resembling one.

Indeed, outside of a few federal crimes such as counterfeiting, treason, and piracy, law enforcement is supposed to be a function of state and local government. Analysts also [noted](#) that there was absolutely no reason for armed federal bureaucrats to be keeping tabs on a peaceful protest — especially when local police with legitimate jurisdiction could have secured the rallies if needed.

“If you have a police force and it’s out of control, you go down to your mayor and you take care of it with your mayor,” [commented](#) conservative pundit Glenn Beck about the latest DHS tactics aimed at Tea Party activists this week. “But if a national police force is out of control, who exactly do you have?”

Beck, who has a sizeable following and a growing media machine, also said Homeland Security was supposed to be for airports. “They were the guys with the really crappy uniforms that have the rubber gloves who were feeling you up at the airport and you’re laughing at them,” he continued. “This is a labor union police force, a federal labor union police force. This is not good.”

A caller on the show who helped organize a 400-person rally targeted by DHS in Cincinnati, meanwhile,



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noted that it was not the first time he had seen federal functionaries sporting “police” outfits. “Congress needs to wake up,” the caller said on the program. “Maybe they’re part of it, I don’t know, but they need to look into this. We are creating a national police force that’s keeping an eye on us and intimidating us.”

The Tea Party demonstrations against the U.S. tax agency at IRS offices across the country, held on May 22, were sparked by recent admissions from senior officials that [conservative groups had been singled out for special scrutiny and inappropriate questioning](#) by authorities. Outraged lawmakers in both political parties and much of the establishment press agreed that the IRS behavior was absolutely unacceptable. [More than seven out of ten Americans](#) thought so, too, and even President Obama publicly feigned concern about the scandal.

Homeland Security Secretary Janet “Big Sis” Napolitano and the increasingly intrusive domestic espionage apparatus, however, evidently did not see it that way. Under the Obama administration, multiple federal agencies and departments — including DHS — have issued absurd “intelligence” reports [based on discredited sources](#) claiming that the real threat to the “Homeland” is [actually conservatives](#). Pro-life activists, Ron Paul supporters, constitutionalists, veterans, people who believe in individual liberty, and countless others are officially in the crosshairs.

Based on recent polls, that includes almost 70 percent of American voters, who [in a survey released this week said](#) they “feel like the federal government has gotten out of control and is threatening the basic civil liberties of Americans.” Even among Democrats, almost half agree that Washington, D.C., is out of control — more than the number who disagreed. Left-wing organizations like the American Civil Liberties Union have also blasted Homeland Security’s lawless spying on peaceful protesters.

“This type of government monitoring and tracking of lawful demonstrations and political speech can have a chilling effect on Americans’ exercise of their rights to free speech and assembly,” Robyn Greene with the ACLU Washington Legislative Office [noted](#) in 2011 after learning that DHS “police” were spying on activists, apparently under the false impression that such behavior was legal. “This is especially true when those demonstrations advocate positions that are in opposition to government policy.... No agency or department in government has the right to monitor the peaceful and lawful political activities and speech of Americans.”

While only a tiny fraction of the growing number of Americans worried about lawless government attended rallies on Tuesday, Homeland Security made sure that its presence was felt. According to news reports, self-styled federal “police” were observed scoping out protests or intimidating activists all across California, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Missouri, and other states. Analysts lashed out at the perceived abuse of power.

“Why aren’t DHS officers protecting the homeland against foreign enemies armed with explosives and hate? Perhaps because the Obama Administration is more worried about domestic ‘enemies’ armed with the Constitution and love of country,” [wrote](#) Sally Zelikovsky about the scandal in the *American Thinker*. She also said the administration sending out DHS agents to spy on Tea Party protests was “further evidence of the Soviet-style ‘War on Dissent.’ ”

“One would think they would be just a bit more circumspect and maybe even exercise a modicum of restraint before dispersing KGB, I mean, DHS agents to free speech rallies protected under the Constitution,” Zelikovsky continued in her stinging criticism of the department’s latest activities. “The fact that they did this so blatantly despite the scrutiny they are under is symptomatic of a government



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on the verge of a constitutional breakdown — a government that doesn't hesitate to bully the little guy while giving the Constitution the proverbial political finger."

The New American reached out to DHS with a series of questions: Why were the agents at these protests? How does DHS respond to critics of this who say it was spying, intimidation, unnecessary, and chilling? Why did the DHS vehicles and personnel have "police" written on them? Does DHS operate a federal police force now? If so, under what statutory or constitutional authority has DHS established a police force? Was permission for the DHS presence obtained from local authorities?

DHS Federal Protective Service Chief of Public Affairs Jacqueline C. Yost responded with a brief statement. "The Federal Protective Service (FPS) protects more than 9,000 federal buildings and 1.4 million federal employees and visitors who occupy them throughout the country every day," she said. "FPS is committed to carrying out this mission in a manner that protects the public's civil rights and civil liberties including freedom of speech and the right to peacefully protest."

Of course, along with the rest of the Obama administration, DHS has come under increasing scrutiny in recent years amid a wide assortment of scandals. Among the most outrageous: Spying on peaceful protesters, sealing contracts for massive amounts of ammunition, stockpiling "weapons of war," molesting air travelers, expanding its powers, defying court orders, issuing wild reports painting regular Americans as potential terrorists, squandering huge sums of money on extra-constitutional "[fusion centers](#)," training local authorities to become extensions of the federal government, and more.

Congress has held hearings and a few lawmakers have introduced legislation to rein in the department, which is perceived by critics as an out-of-control behemoth that could easily be abused. As the outcry among Americans continues to mount, calls for abolishing the DHS are growing as well. Unsurprisingly, the latest developments have already contributed to the furor. Whether any action will be taken by Congress, however, remains to be seen.

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