

Speaker

Clean Verbatim Transcript

Michael
German:

Hi, thanks very much for having me. It's my privilege to speak to this group.

My work at the Brennan center for the past couple of years has focused on law enforcement response to far-right violence or the lack of law enforcement response to far-right violence. And my latest report that just came out about a week and a half ago focused on racism white supremacy and far-right militancy within law enforcement.

So, this has been a persistent problem that I was aware of as an FBI agent in the 1990s when I was working domestic terrorism investigations, looking into white supremacists, violent white supremacists and far-right militants, but, it remains a problem, and yet there's no national strategy to address it.

And, of course, in looking into that, I've been paying quite a bit of attention to what has been going on in Portland. And, to see this latest tactic that the federal government is using to override the local district attorney is highly problematic.

We're seeing it elsewhere, as well, particularly in Philadelphia, and, now in Rochester, New York. Also DC, of course, is a federal district, but we're seeing a more aggressive approach after protest to target protesters.

From what I understand in Portland, most of the federal charges are still misdemeanors, which I want people to understand. It's a rare thing for the federal government to charge misdemeanors, and I think that's one thing to

keep in mind that I think what what they're trying to do is boost their numbers so that they can authenticate what President Trump and Attorney General Barr has been saying about antifa driving these protests, rather than Black Lives Matter activists.

But, you know, keep in mind that the federal courts are overburdened, and probably will not be very happy with the US Attorney who's going to trial on misdemeanor cases. So, the flip side to this problem of the federal government stepping in when the district attorney has dismissed charges is that it doubles the number of overseers.

So, obviously the Portland City Council has been active on these cases, but now there's an opportunity to use the federal oversight mechanisms to try to get some accountability for these crimes.

While we have the US Attorney charging protesters with misdemeanors, they're not charging police officers with civil rights violations. There are any number of different actors out there who are accounting for this police violence. So, there's a lawyer in North Carolina named Greg Doucette who's got a list of videotaped examples of unnecessary police violence during protests.

So, appealing to the US attorney about why these cases aren't being charged, and now because these are federalized local police that are making these arrests, the US Department of Justice Inspector General has oversight of that. And, he's already doing an investigation of the US Marshals involved in the protest violence earlier in Portland. So you can appeal to him, that's Inspector General Michael Horowitz to expand that

investigation to look at any violence perpetrated by any federalized law enforcement officers, as well.

And, of course, the Congressional overseers including on the House Homeland Security Committee, House Judiciary Committee, and House Government Oversight Committee have been looking at these issues. So there are ways to focus your attention to make sure there's accountability for these agencies that are trying to use the federal authorities to override local control.