



## **Using JTTFs to Investigate Protesters: What You Need to Know**

On Sunday, May 31, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) announced that they will use the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) 56 nationwide Joint Terrorism Task Forces (JTTF) to investigate "violence instigated by Antifa and other similar groups" under domestic terrorism laws. This announcement is likely to lead to increased surveillance, harassment and arrests of protesters by local and federal law enforcement agencies, particularly Black organizers fighting for justice and accountability. To empower you to protect yourself, here is some information about the JTTFs and your rights when facing FBI/JTTF harassment.

### **What are the JTTFs?**

JTTFs are FBI-led programs that take state and local law enforcement officers, such as the Oakland Police Department, and cross-deputize them as FBI agents. These programs require state and local law enforcement officers to follow FBI rules on investigations and questioning, which often violate civil rights and criminalize communities of color. The FBI uses the local knowledge these officers have to surveil and target communities of color - particularly Black and Muslim communities.

Many California state and local law enforcement agencies participate in JTTFs, including the California Highway Patrol, Los Angeles Police and Sheriff's Departments, Alameda County Sheriff's Department, Oakland Police Department, and BART Police Department.

### **Why are JTTFs Problematic?**

The FBI has a decades-long history of surveilling, criminalizing, and even murdering Black activists fighting for justice. Since its creation, the FBI has quelled protests against injustice through programs such as COINTELPRO, which attempted to surveil, discredit, and eliminate social justice movements such as the anti-war, Black Power, and civil rights movements. The JTTFs are just another iteration of the FBI's targeting and criminalization of communities of color. While we have the right to protest injustice against our communities, we also know that the FBI has always targeted protesters, and we should be aware of our rights when facing FBI harassment.

Under a practice known as "assessments," FBI/JTTF officers can surveil and investigate anyone without even "reasonable suspicion". They can open an assessment for vague allegations like "national security."

By using the JTTFs to investigate and prosecute “Antifa and similar groups” under domestic terrorism laws, the DOJ has put a target on all protesters showing up for justice across the country. This allows them to interview other people about a targeted individual, request records from other federal agencies on the individual, follow the individual day and night, use informants to spy on the individual, and initiate “voluntary” interviews with the individual.

### **What Can You Do to Protect Yourself?**

If you are approached by an FBI agent or a local police officer working with the JTTF, or otherwise, at your home or workplace, remember to exercise your rights:

1. **You Have the Rights to Remain Silent.** You are not obligated to answer questions from an FBI agent or a local police officer working with the JTTF. Your refusal to talk to the agent may not be used against you.
2. **You Have the Right to Request an Attorney’s Assistance.** You should refuse to answer questions until you have had a chance to speak with an attorney. Even if you have already started talking, you can stop at any time. Tell the agent you do not want to answer any more questions without a lawyer present.

Simply put, you should say, “Can I have your business card? I would like to remain silent. I will have my lawyer follow up with you.”

If an FBI agent or a JTTF officer stops you while you are on foot, you should know the following:

1. **You Have the Right to Not Answer Any Questions.** You do not have to answer any questions, but providing your name, address, and age if asked (and ID if you are being given a citation) may help you avoid arrest. NEVER GIVE ANY FALSE INFORMATION OR PROVIDE FALSE DOCUMENTS – you can be charged with a felony for lying to the JTTF/FBI even if the mistake was innocent on your part.
2. **You Can Verbally Refuse to Consent to a Search.** The JTTF agent may “pat down” your clothing if they suspect a concealed weapon. Do not physically resist, but tell them politely, “I do not consent to a search.”
3. **Ask the Officer, “Am I Free to Leave?”** If the officer says yes, calmly walk away. Do not argue with the officer, or run away, even if you believe that what is happening is unfair. This could lead to your arrest.

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