Paramilitaries at Your Protest: An Activist Field Guide to the Armed Far-Right

Janeteenth Edition

Why this Guide
Since the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police, PRA has documented nearly 150 incidents of armed right-wing actors showing up at racial justice protests. They have threatened and harassed racial justice protestors, collaborated with the police, claimed to support police accountability, and shot and killed law enforcement personnel.

The presence of armed paramilitaries militarizes protest space, normalizes open carry of assault weapons in our communities, and offers an additional excuse for police to deploy military weapons and tactics against our communities. There have also been credible reports of young white men, possibly unaffiliated with organized right-wing groups, committing acts of vandalism, arson, and provocation without regard for and in contradiction of movement tactics established by Black-led organizations.

Though their numbers are usually small, these far-right and paramilitary activists have had significant consequences for Black-led organizing efforts, raising the level of fear and suspicion and distracting attention from the just goals of protesters.

To keep our movements safe, we all need to better understand who these paramilitaries are, what threats they pose, and what to do when they are present.

What to do:

Take Action:
Contact (or designate) a movement security person to receive reports, assess threats, and develop responses that can lead to two zones: Be sure that you have a plan. Mobilize mobile phones to take video or photos of far-right groups when safe to do so. Document vehicle details, uniforms, patches, signs, and actions. Forward your incident reports to the designated local security person who can then contact other groups and seek clarification from PRA and other movement support organizations.

Know Your Rights:
Make sure that you have the number for legal support written down. Never talk to the police without a lawyer present. Movement friendly legal resources include Creating Law Enforcement Accountability and Responsibility (CLEAR) and the National Lawyers' Guild (NLG).

Digital Security:
Far-right actors have been seen to doxx activists, exposing them to both trolling and law enforcement action. Contact a movement-friendly digital security partner, such as Equality Labs.