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European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

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09.05.2022

Contractors linked to fascist paramilitary groups paid to train police in at least 12 US states

A new report by Reuters details ties between Trump-aligned fascist militia groups and police departments across the country. The report identifies five “police trainers” who have been paid, with tax-payer money, by police departments in at least 12 states, including, Idaho, Washington, Texas and Missouri.

The report asserts that the trainers have ties to the Oath Keepers, Three Percenters and Proud Boys militia groups. Members of these groups are currently facing the most serious charges stemming from Trump’s failed coup of January 6, 2021, including seditious conspiracy, to which three Oath Keepers have already pled guilty.

One of the trainers identified by Reuters is Richard Whitehead, the current owner of Richard Whitehead & Assoc. LLC. The company, per Reuters, is one of “35 training firms that advertised at least 10 police or public-safety training sessions in 2021” on policetraining.net, a website used by police departments around the US to find for-profit trainers.

In addition to being a dues-paying member of the Oath Keepers from 2016 to 2017, Whitehead ran for sheriff of Kootenai County, Idaho in 2020. Prior to, and during the campaign, he openly aligned himself with the Constitutional Sheriffs and Peace Officers Association, a far-right movement founded by former sheriff and Oath Keeper co-founder Richard Mack.

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Whitehead cut a promotional video with the Three Percenters group as part of his campaign, Reuters notes.

Public records analyzed by the news agency show that Whitehead has taught “at least 560 police officers and other public safety workers in 85 sessions in 12 states over the past four years.”



Trump supporters storm the Capitol, Wednesday, Jan. 6, 2021, in Washington. (AP Photo/John Minchillo)

Whitehead boasts that prior to training police full-time, he spent 33 years in law enforcement, including leading “homicide, SWAT, communications and intelligence” sections. He claims to have “trained investigators of all types in statement analysis,” including detectives, private eyes and members of the Texas Rangers.

Reuters wrote that its review of Whitehead’s social media postings found that he previously called for the “execution of government officials he sees as disloyal” to Trump. In language echoed by Michigan Boogaloo Boys militia members who plotted to kidnap and possibly assassinate Democratic Governor Gretchen Whitmer in the lead-up to the November 2020 elections, Whitehead called on police to ignore COVID-19 public health orders issued by “tyrannical governors,” warning, “We are on the brink of civil war.”

Whitehead is currently scheduled to host training courses for police in May, June, July,

August, September and October 2022, per policetraining.net. The courses are scheduled to take place in Belton, Harker, Heights and McKinney, Texas; Missoula, Montana; Neosho, Missouri; Fruitland, Idaho and Seattle, Washington.

Another far-right police trainer identified by Reuters is Ryan Morris, founder of Tripwire Operations Group. Morris claims his company held some 50 training classes in 2021, “about half” of which were attended by law enforcement types.

In an interview with Reuters, he admitted that he and other Tripwire trainers were in Washington D.C. on January 6, 2021. Prior to January 6, Tripwire’s social media accounts promoted Trump’s lies about the election having been stolen. In one post, written a month before the attack on the US Capitol, Morris called Biden’s victory a “coup, the overthrow of the US free election system, the end of our constitutional republic and the merge [sic] of capitalism into the slide toward socialism.”

In his interview, Morris admitted that he and “several other” Tripwire trainers were employed at the “Stop the Steal” rally on January 6, 2021.

Morris refused to tell Reuters who hired him, or in what capacity Tripwire trainers were employed at the rally, but he did say they were sometimes hired to “help law enforcement agencies” or “protect high-level executives.”

Another fascist police trainer identified in the report is an individual named Tim Kennedy, who told Reuters he held “about 200 training sessions across the United States in 2021” for police officers. The previous year he shared a post in which he aligned himself with the Boogaloo Boys.

In that post he wrote about his desire to “boogaloo,” a euphemism for violent race war. Two months later, Kennedy posted a photo of himself wearing a Hawaiian shirt, the unofficial uniform of the Boogaloo movement, while aiming an assault rifle. The picture was captioned: “If you choose to be an asshole... I picked out a special shirt for the occasion.”

According to Reuters, in addition to promoting the Boogaloo Boys on social media,

Kennedy interacted frequently with Proud Boys leader Joseph Biggs. Biggs is currently jailed pending trial for his actions on January 6.

A US Army veteran and correspondent for the fascistic “Infowars” program hosted by Alex Jones, Biggs is facing multiple charges, including obstruction of Congress, obstruction of law enforcement, destruction of government property, and assaulting, resisting or impeding law enforcement.

Reuters notes that “Kennedy’s Twitter account shows that he has been an associate of Joe Biggs... their online interactions were as recent as May 2018, several months before Biggs’ Twitter account was suspended.” In the Twitter posts, Kennedy discussed going on motorcycle rides with Biggs and offering him the position of interior secretary in his imagined administration.

The pair also discussed an alleged Antifa rally, with Biggs writing, “Going downtown to cause havoc,” to which Kennedy replied enthusiastically, “Same. Sounds like a date!”

Biggs, whose trial is set for August 8, was photographed at the Trump International Hotel with South Carolina Senator Lindsey Graham in November 2019.

That police departments and federal agencies around the country employ the services of fascistic paramilitary types with ties to militia groups to “train” their forces will not come as a surprise to regular readers of the *World Socialist Web Site*.

Last year, the WSWS reported that during the January 6 attack on Congress, the US Capitol Police’s Containment Emergency Response Team, or CERT, which was tasked with evacuating members of Congress, failed to respond to calls for help.

In testimony before Congress, now-retired Capitol Police Inspector General Michael Bolton revealed that the Capitol Police had paid a private contractor, Northern Red LLC, over \$90,000 in 2018 and 2019 to train CERT. According to a report authored by Bolton, the CERT team refused to fire its “less-lethal” rounds to protect Congress.

The founder and CEO of Northern Red, John-David Potynsky, is a former US Army Special Forces soldier who continues to this day to use neo-Nazi iconography in his

company's logo and uniform patches, and on his website. Bolton warned in his testimony that it was urgent for the Capitol Police to immediately sever all ties with the neo-fascist outfit. It appears, however, that other US government agencies did not feel the same way.

On the Northern Red website, the company continues to advertise training services for police and military members "only." The website notes that in March, Northern Red held a "Close Quarters Combat" course for military and police personnel at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, commonly known as Fort Dix, located south of Trenton, New Jersey.

World Socialist 07.05.2022