More attacks on anti-Trump protesters at Tucson, Arizona campaign rally

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Yet another campaign rally for Republican presidential frontrunner Donald Trump was marred by violence on Saturday, this time in Tucson, Arizona, including one incident involving a plainclothes member of Trump's private security team.

Trump has made a practice of singling out and inciting violence against protesters by members of the crowd at his campaign stops, combining a formal "disavowal" of violence with support for the "understandable" frustration on the part of the attackers and thinly-veiled threats of further violence. At a previous rally in North Carolina, Trump offered to pay the legal fees of a supporter who was arrested after attacking a Trump protester and afterwards threatened to kill the protester if he attended another Trump rally.

The revelation that one of the confrontations was initiated by a member of Trump's private campaign security team, revealed Sunday by *Politico*, is a further demonstration that violence against his political opponents is in fact an official approved tactic of the Trump campaign, which has taken on a distinctly fascistic character.

Shortly after the latter incident, reporters covering the Trump campaign identified the man as one of Trump's hired goons, who have been caught on camera manhandling protesters and journalists at past rallies. They have been increasingly deployed in street clothes and dispersed among the crowd in an attempt by the Trump campaign to identify and remove the protesters which have become an increasingly common fixture at his rallies.

Trump singled out the unidentified protester to the crowd in the middle of his appearance and ordered his private security detail to have him hauled out of the venue, at which point Trump's campaign manager, Corey Lewandowski, made his way through the crowd towards the protester.

Press reports indicated that the video showed that Lewandowski had yanked the protester by the collar in the ensuing scuffle, but the Trump campaign came to Lewandowski's defense, arguing that instead it was an unidentified man in a black pullover standing behind the protester. Lewandowski was filmed at a previous rally manhandling a female reporter from the right-wing Breitbart web site.

After the assault on the protester, Trump continued to assail protesters from the podium. "They're taking away our First Amendment rights, they're troublemakers, they're not good, and we'd better be careful. We've got to take our country back, folks."

On *This Week* on ABC Sunday morning Trump blamed the incident on the protester himself, whom Trump accused of being a "professional agitator." "I give [Lewandowski] credit for having spirit," he added, "he wanted them to take down those horrible profanity laced signs."

When asked for comment by *Politico* for a report which revealed that the man in the black pullover was one of Trump's own "professional agitators," a Trump campaign spokeswoman was noncommittal, adding ominously, "We will be dedicating additional security resources to larger events in the future to prevent staff from having to intervene," a clear indication that the Trump campaign is planning more intensive provocations in the near future.

In another incident at Saturday's rally, a protester being escorted out of the venue by several uniformed Tucson police officers was savagely beaten and kicked by a rally attendee. The attack, captured on bystander video, was allowed to continue for several seconds before police arrested the man.

The Tucson rally was also a further demonstration of

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the close collaboration between the Trump campaign and local law enforcement, many of whom support Trump's fascistic and violent rhetoric, in the suppressing opposition.

Security for the event was provided by the infamous Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio, whose blatantly racist and discriminatory treatment of immigrants in the border state have made him one of the most reviled law enforcement officials in the country. Arpaio appeared at the rally in an unofficial capacity, as Tucson is 115 miles southeast of Arpaio's jurisdiction, which includes the city of Phoenix.

Arpaio, who endorsed Trump at the beginning of the year, also appeared onstage at Saturday's rally. Relishing this clear conflict of interest and issuing veiled threats against protesters, Arpaio told *Politico* before the rally, "Here I'm gonna be kinda wearing two hats … [it] is going to be a lot of fun taking care of business there." Police arrested three protesters outside of the venue for attempting to block traffic. "We're not going to let any demonstrators intimidate this forum or this sheriff in my town," Arpaio declared to the media.

Arpaio also appeared at a previous Trump rally in Las Vegas last month, where he praised Trump's stated goal of forcing the Mexican government to build a wall along the US-Mexican border. At that rally, Trump threatened a protester in the crowd, declaring "I'd like to punch him in the face, I tell ya," and adding, "You know what they used to do to guys like that when they were in a place like this? They'd be carried out on a stretcher."

Speaking to *Politco* Arpaio belittled concerns that the Republican frontrunner was openly threatening criminal violence against his political opponents, blithely declaring, "I just thought that when you have a rally, you're supposed to rally people and kind of say things that are exciting."

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