Leaked manual reveals ICE informants posing as attorneys, clergy

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26 June 2018

The independent media outlet *Unicorn Riot* has published the "Undercover Operations Manual" used by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to regulate the use of informants and to infiltrate pro-immigrant organizations. This handbook is the fifth and latest document related to the functioning of ICE that has been published by *Unicorn Riot* as part of its "Icebreaker" series.

The manual has been in use for at least eight years since 2008 and its later editions are reportedly very similar to the version that has been exposed.

Divided into 14 chapters and 10 appendices, the 227-page manual provides a detailed look at the ways in which the agency has charted procedures governing all kinds of covert actions including, but not limited to, breaking federal laws.

The text contains information on special training programs where agents can obtain training for various covert operations, including the infiltration of religious, political, legal and media organizations. ICE operatives are told how they might obtain false identities and insert falsified records into government databases. The manual also spells out the specific steps needed for approval of undercover operations, including those that are "sensitive" and would need "statutory exemptions."

The manual also gives insight into the shady world of budgeting such operations. There are detailed instructions on how commissions and stipends can be used to pay informants, and how profits from illegal undercover operations can be funneled back into more secret operations.

Among the policy directives given to agents are warnings about how bank balances related to shell companies should be limited to $100,000 because of insurance limits. The business information company Dun & Bradstreet is named as the organization that helps agents create "backstopped" fake identities for shell companies by connecting them to corporate property, finance and aircraft registration systems. Agents are warned, however, that due to advances in technology, there are limitations with the backstopped identities and that they need to have other contingency plans in place.

Up until now, there has been very little known about how ICE uses its informants. The "House of Death" case over a decade ago, in which 12 bodies were found buried in the garden of a house in Ciudad Juarez, exposed some of the grisly underbelly of ICE operations across borders. A few media outlets highlighted the fact that the killings had been carried out with the full knowledge of ICE and by an ICE informant who had received more than $220,000 in payment for services rendered. However, the story was quickly buried with no official response from any US government agency.

The issue of informants forms an important part of the manual. It is apparent that ICE places a great emphasis on making sure that handlers can compensate informants financially. This also takes the form of the agency allowing them to "commit profitable crimes." In this bizarre universe, it is perhaps not surprising to find out that ICE uses psychologists to ensure that informants keep operating in otherwise traumatic conditions.

Taken together with the other ICE handbooks exposed by *Unicorn Riot*—including those on denaturalization, asset seizure, and how ICE trains its agents to get around the Fourth Amendment—what we have is the picture of an agency that is vast and labyrinthine, with limited oversight and rapidly expanding powers.

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