

Federal task force kills suspect in slaying of right-wing Trump supporter in Portland

Niles Niemuth

5 September 2020

A special fugitive task force led by federal agents shot and killed 48-year-old Michael Forest Reinoehl in Washington state Thursday evening, just hours after a judge in Oregon issued a warrant for his arrest in relation to the killing of a Trump supporter at a protest in Portland on August 29.

The news of Reinoehl's killing broke only minutes after President Donald Trump tweeted a demand that the police take action against the anti-fascist activist. "Why aren't the Portland Police ARRESTING the cold blooded killer of Aaron 'Jay' Danielson?" Trump wrote. "Do your job, and do it fast. Everybody knows who this thug is. No wonder Portland is going to hell!"

A member of the far-right Patriot Prayer organization, Danielson, 39, was shot and killed last Saturday during a right-wing provocation in which Trump supporters drove pickup trucks through downtown Portland while firing paintballs and engaging in fist fights with anti-police violence protesters.

Following the Thursday shooting of Reinoehl, a father of two, Attorney General William Barr issued a ghoulish statement applauding what appears to have been a summary execution carried out by US marshals, FBI agents and state and local police. Barr's statement twice referred to Reinoehl as a member of Antifa, when, in fact, the deceased had explicitly denied membership in the shadowy, if even existent, organization.

Barr called the killing of Reinoehl "a significant accomplishment in the ongoing effort to restore law and order to Portland and other cities." He went on to say: "The streets of our cities are safer with this violent agitator removed, and the actions that led to his location are an unmistakable demonstration that the United States will be governed by law, not violent mobs."

This followed an interview in which Barr defended the police shooting on August 23 of Jacob Blake in Kenosha, Wisconsin, declaring that the police were seeking to execute an arrest warrant and that the victim, now paralyzed from the waist down, was armed. Eyewitnesses to the shooting of Blake claim he was unarmed when he was shot in the back seven times by a veteran Kenosha police officer.

Barr has issued no condemnation of the pro-Trump vigilante, Kyle Rittenhouse, who murdered two protesters in Kenosha last month, and Trump has openly defended the killer.

Reinoehl had regularly participated in anti-police-violence protests in Portland. He took responsibility for Danielson's death, telling freelance journalist Donovan Farley in an interview posted Thursday by *VICE News* that he had shot Danielson in self-defense, fearing that he and a friend were about to be stabbed. "I had no choice," he said. "I mean, I had a choice. I could have sat there and watched them kill a friend of mine of color. But I wasn't going to do that."

"I was confident that I did not hit anyone innocent and I made my exit," Reinoehl added.

He explained that he had not yet turned himself in to the police because he believed they were collaborating with right-wing groups that were "hunting" him, and that he would not be safe in police custody. "They're out hunting me," he told Farley. "There's nightly posts of the hunt and where they're going to be hunting. They made a post saying the deer are going to feel lucky this year because it's open season on Michael right now."

The law enforcement task force that tracked down and killed Reinoehl in Lacey, Washington, the Pacific Northwest Violent Offenders Task Force, included agents from the US Marshals and the FBI as well as

officers from the Lakewood Police Department, the Pierce County Sheriff's Department and the Washington State Department of Corrections.

Witnesses reported hearing dozens of shots fired during the encounter. According to the US Marshals, Reinoehl "produced a firearm" after being approached in his vehicle by officers, prompting them to open fire. "Task force members responded to the threat and struck the suspect, who was pronounced dead at the scene," the Marshals stated. Bystander video of the aftermath shows heavily armed officers standing around Reinhoe's body as they secure the area.

Lt. Ray Brady of the Thurston County Sheriff's Office, the department that is overseeing the local investigation into the shooting, told the media that four officers had fired their weapons, but he could not confirm if Reinoehl had opened fire.

Portland has been the scene of nightly protests against police violence and racism for more than three months, part of the wave of nationwide and international multi-racial protests that erupted in the aftermath of the killing of George Floyd by four Minneapolis police officers at the end of May.

The situation was dramatically escalated in July when President Trump deployed federal agents—including the US Border Patrol's paramilitary BORTAC force—under the guise of protecting Portland's federal courthouse. Federal police in riot gear fired tear gas and "less lethal" rounds at demonstrators, in one instance fracturing a protester's skull. Most chillingly, federal agents began abducting protesters and throwing them into unmarked vans, in snatch-and-grab operations reminiscent of Latin American dictatorships.

At the end of July, federal forces pulled back in the face of growing protests, with an agreement by Democratic Governor Kate Brown to deploy the state police against the protesters. Now, Trump and Department of Homeland Security Acting Director Chad Wolf are once again discussing deploying federal agents against the protests in Portland.

"We're ready, willing and able to send in, you know, a massive group of people that are really highly trained," Trump said Tuesday during a visit with law enforcement officials in Kenosha. "We could solve that problem in less than an hour in Portland," he stated.

He then nodded to Attorney General Barr and added, "At some point, Bill, we'll just have to do it

ourselves." As a first step, state police have been deputized by the US Marshals to act as federal agents, allowing for protesters they detain to be charged in federal, rather than state, courts.

Trump has been using the protests against police violence—most recently the demonstrations against the Blake shooting in Kenosha—to wage a law-and-order campaign and whip up his fascistic base in the lead-up to the November 3 presidential election.

During a campaign speech in Latrobe, Pennsylvania Thursday afternoon, Trump promised he would "bring to justice" the "rioters, looters, violent extremists, anarchists." He boasted that "We have over 400 right now under arrest."

He declared his Democratic opponent, former Vice President Joe Biden, to be a "puppet of the socialist, Marxist and cop-hating extremists." He later stated that while Biden would "appease the domestic terrorists," his plan was "to arrest them and prosecute them."

For his part, Biden has responded with his own law and order ad campaign, denouncing anti-police-violence protesters who engage in vandalism or looting and placing the blame for violent clashes between police and demonstrators on Trump, even though in most cases the cities that have seen significant protests and police repression are run by Democratic administrations.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact