

# Sheriff defends Michigan conspirators as details emerge of plot's scope, links to police and Trump campaign

Eric London  
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Additional details are emerging about the plans and possible political connections of the fascist militiamen who were arrested last week for plotting to kidnap and kill Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer.

During a federal court hearing in Grand Rapids, Michigan Tuesday morning, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Special Agent Richard Trask announced that the Michigan conspirators also discussed killing Ralph Northam, the Democratic governor of Virginia. According to Trask, the plotters raised expanding their plans beyond Michigan when they met in Dublin, Ohio in June.

The FBI has not yet released details of the group's contacts in Ohio, Virginia or Wisconsin, where the plotters planned to put Whitmer on trial and kill her after capturing her at her vacation home in northern Michigan.

According to a CNN report, Barry County Sheriff Dar Leaf, leading member of the fascist Constitutional Sheriffs and Peace Officers Association (CSPOA), openly defended the actions of the plotters and claimed they were legal.

"A lot of people are angry with the governor and they want her arrested," Leaf said. "So are they trying to arrest or was it a kidnap attempt? Because you can still, in Michigan if it's a felony, you can still make a felony arrest. And it doesn't say if you are in elected office that you are exempt from that arrest. So I have to look at it from that angle."

Leaf also admitted that he had participated in rallies with two of the defendants, Michael and William Null, on multiple occasions. He defended the role of the militia, saying, "Well, you look at the media itself and the originations of the militia. They have more of a

legal standing in this country than the agencies that arrested them."

*Urban Milwaukee* reported yesterday that prominent CSPOA member and Trump spokesman David Clarke, former sheriff of Milwaukee County, traveled to Michigan in April to address a crowd of anti-lockdown protestors.

The article is titled, "Did David Clarke Inspire Michigan Militia?" It explains: "In mid-April, when protestors gathered in Lansing to urge resistance to pandemic restrictions put in place by Whitmer, Clarke was a featured speaker." A number of the conspirators attended this rally. It is not known if any of them met with Clarke.

These statements come as new facts are emerging that raise additional questions about the connections of the plotters themselves.

Huron Valley Guns, the Michigan store where Eric Trump had planned to hold a rally this week, employed Paul Edward Bellar of Milford this past February. Bellar, a 21-year-old ex-Army soldier, was arrested Thursday in South Carolina on Michigan state charges. The FBI became aware of the conspirators' activities in early 2020.

Bellar allegedly played an important role in the plot. According to the state charges, he was "appointed the role of 'Sergeant'" within the Wolverine Watchmen because he "had specific expertise in medical and firearms training and designed tactical exercises for training."

Bellar's employment raises questions about the connections of those involved in the plot to the Trump campaign and the police. Bellar's neighbors repeatedly called the police on the militiaman this summer, with

one neighbor telling local ABC affiliate WXYZ that Bellar advertised his role in the militia.

“He’s spit on neighbors before, he’s yelled at us all before, we told him to stop walking around [with guns], we called the cops and they didn’t do anything about it,” the neighbor said.

Was this because police recognized Bellar from the gun range attached to Huron Valley Guns?

Owner Ed Swadish is an avid Trump supporter and vocal Whitmer opponent with political connections to the police, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the Republican Party and the Trump campaign.

Public records show that Huron Valley Guns has been the recipient of tens of thousands of dollars in contracts to train ICE officers and police from across the region. Beginning in 2018, the company won a \$58,500 bid with the Department of Homeland Security to train ICE officers at the facility’s firing range.

According to the contract, Huron Valley Guns agreed to “provide an indoor private secure firearms range facility that satisfies ICE training needs in firearms qualifications, mandated Advanced Firearms Training Exercises (AFTE) and Special Response Team (SRT) training.”

On January 13, 2020, Huron Valley Guns was awarded another contract, valued at \$45,300, to train police assigned to the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The company also serves as a central meeting place for leading police officials throughout the state. Aside from being a gun store and range, the facility also includes a banquet hall and restaurant.

Swadish and Huron Valley Guns host meetings and fundraisers for Republican Party politicians. According to public Facebook posts, these include Oakland County Sheriff Mike Bouchard and Milford Republican State Representative Matt Maddock.

Maddock and his wife, Meshawn Maddock, are the founders of the Michigan Conservative Coalition, a right-wing lobbying group that funded the state’s anti-lockdown protests earlier this year. Meshawn Maddock serves on the advisory board for Trump’s Michigan campaign and is a leader of the “Women for Trump” organization.

Swadish was also very active in opposing the limited lockdown measures Whitmer imposed to contain the spread of the coronavirus pandemic, which has killed over 6,000 Michiganders since the spring.

He has connections to the FBI. Huron Valley Guns was a featured vendor at an FBI National Academy Associates (FBINAA) retreat held on Mackinac Island in September 2018. Swadish posted a photograph of himself at the FBINAA retreat held in the same location the following year.

According to the FBINAA’s website, “The FBI National Academy Associates, Inc. (FBI NAA) is a non-profit, international organization of 17,000 senior law enforcement professionals,” which conducts training sessions and provides networking opportunities between federal authorities and state and local police.

These facts raise many unanswered questions about the plotters, their national plans and their connections to the Trump campaign and the forces of state repression. What is now publicly known is only the tip of the iceberg.



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