

Anti-war podcaster harassed by police after criticizing Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez on Twitter

Genevieve Leigh
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On April 8, two plainclothes police officers were dispatched by Capitol Police to the home of Ryan Wentz, an anti-war activist and producer for Soapbox, an online media company, over a tweet involving Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.

The police officers showed up outside Wentz's home in Los Angeles on Friday. Wentz recounted the experience to the *World Socialist Web Site*: "I have a fence in front of my house. I saw these two heads bobbing up and down, and they were calling my name. I was waiting for food delivery and thought that's what it was about." After Wentz saw their badges and refused the officers' request to have a discussion inside his home, they began questioning him about the alleged tweet.

"They said that they were here [at my house] on behalf of the Capitol Police because I had threatened to kill a sitting member of Congress in a tweet. They said that I had tagged the sitting member of Congress in the tweet." Wentz says he never has and never would threaten anyone.

"Only after two minutes or so into the discussion did they say it was AOC." Wentz then recalled that he had tweeted about Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez the day before.

Ocasio-Cortez's office has denied that the congresswoman or anyone in her office reported Wentz's post.

Wentz reports that the police proceeded to ask him a series of personal questions about his mental health, his family, and if he was "a political person" among other questions. He refused to answer most of the questions without a lawyer present.

The tweet that apparently prompted the police visit

was a video clip of Ocasio-Cortez in which she provided a tortuously convoluted response to a question on the Israel-Palestine conflict, which bordered on incomprehensible. Wentz described her answer to the question as "incredibly underwhelming" and, as is commonplace on Twitter, tagged the congresswoman.

Wentz's post prompted a firestorm of responses, including many followers and former supporters of Ocasio-Cortez who were infuriated at her answer.

One user tweeted, "I know less having just listened to that." Another wrote, "Wtf is she talking about? I'm actually embarrassed for her. Just craven gibberish of the highest order. Man, she's getting worse by the week." Another user wrote: "I'm incredibly impressed with @AOC's Obama-like ability to fill large amounts of time with words while saying absolutely nothing. I challenge anyone to tell me what she just said."

The post has been retweeted and liked thousands of times.

The police officers from California Highway Patrol showed up at Wentz's home 24 hours later. The fact that they were acting at the behest of the Capitol Police in Washington D.C. was confirmed in statements from the Capitol Police to Fox News:

USCP investigates all threats that are reported by Congressional offices. The Department also monitors open and classified sources to identify and investigate threats. ... This is standard operating procedure for the Department. As it pertains to this incident, the Congresswomen did not request that USCP initiate an investigation.

However, the story reported by Fox News from the police regarding the tweet had changed considerably since speaking to Wentz. According to the statement from Capitol Police to *Fox News*, one officer indicated that the podcaster was targeted not for any tweet that he had directly authored. Rather, he came under their “radar” for “a tweet authored by another user that was deemed threatening.” The content of the alleged tweet has not been made known.

In response to the revised version of the story, Wentz told the WSWs that he was unsure of what was really going on. “Maybe once the story blew up, they realized it was going to cause them problems. Or maybe they had really targeted me because of someone else’s tweet. But either way, it is quite alarming.” Wentz also pointed out that pro-Palestine speech is one of the most policed forms of speech in the US.

Wentz tweeted shortly after the police “visit” to his home: “I felt scared, intimidated, and violated. [The police] knew my name and where I live. It was done on behalf of a congresswoman who advocates against police state tactics.”

The fact that either a tweet criticizing Ocasio-Cortez or a tweet in which Wentz was tagged but did not author could lead to police harassment at Wentz’s home has serious implications for the entire working class.

“I want her to publicly condemn this. If she is progressive, which I don’t think she really is, then there is no reason she would not condemn this police intimidation. I want her to condemn this as an egregious overreach.” Wentz continued, “But more than that. I want her to respond to the political content of the criticisms made. The issue of Palestine deserves more than a word salad of a response from someone branding themselves as a socialist.”

These developments come in the context of a series of political exposures by the *World Socialist Web Site* of Ocasio-Cortez’s defense of the Biden administration.

The WSWs article on Ocasio-Cortez’s interview with *Democratic Left* denouncing socialist opponents of Biden was read by more than 100,000 workers and young people. It created a political crisis within the Democratic Party as it exposed the fraudulent pretenses of the main representative of the “left wing” of the Democrats.



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