

With robust police escort, fascist paramilitary group stages Saturday night march on Lincoln Memorial

Jacob Crosse
5 December 2021

“Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.”

-Abraham Lincoln, November 19, 1863 Gettysburg Address, inscribed at the Lincoln Memorial

In a sickening display facilitated by the police, over 100 members from the neo-Nazi Patriot Front group staged a fascist march Saturday evening in Washington D.C. Led by the group’s founder, 23-year-old Thomas Rousseau, members of the white supremacist organization marched in formation to the beat of a snare drum while chanting fascist slogans and bearing a banner inscribed “Reclaim America.”

While it is unknown at this time if the group had a permit, the cowardly modern day brown-shirts were protected by hundreds of police throughout their hours-long march through the National Mall. Members of the group carried American flags and round riot shields while their faces were covered with white masks, which is illegal in Washington D.C. Before they began their march, fascists deployed smoke grenades while some, preparing for violence, affixed what appeared to be hockey pads over their brown khakis with matching combat boots.

The Patriot Front is a minuscule fascist outfit based in Texas that used to be known as Vanguard America, but was forced to re-brand itself after pictures emerged showing founder Rousseau and neo-Nazi James Alex Fields standing in formation carrying shields bearing the group’s old logo during the August 12, 2017 “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville, Virginia. Shortly after this picture was taken, Fields would go on to murder Heather Heyer and injure dozens more after he

deliberately rammed his car into a crowd of anti-fascist counterprotesters.

The substantial police escort afforded to the fascists prevented angry onlookers from getting too close, allowing the group to march unimpeded to the Lincoln Memorial. Social media video taken of the march shows disgusted witnesses shouting profanities at the group as they scurry down the steps of the memorial dedicated to the former president who was assassinated by a white supremacist.

Rousseau said the purpose of the march was an “exhibition of our unified capability to organize, to show our strength—not as brawlers or public nuisances, but as men capable of illustrating a message and seeking an America that more closely resembles the interests of its true people.”

Attempting to distance themselves from the same elements they incited and cultivated to storm the Capitol on January 6, far-right Republican politicians and media figures, as they have with Trump’s coup, attempted to discredit the group by claiming they were affiliated with the FBI.

“The fake group called the Patriot Front” were “probably the same Feds who were at the J6 event checking their watches,” wrote admitted Oath Keeper member and Arizona state representative Wendy Rogers on Twitter Sunday.

Likewise, fascist commentator Dinesh D’Souza, a convicted felon whom Trump pardoned in 2018, wrote on Twitter: “This looks fake to me. Why are their faces covered? Is it because they are FBI agents posing as right-wing extremists? Where are the media interviews so we can see and hear directly from the group?”

According to a study published by the Anti-

Defamation League earlier this year documenting “racist antisemitic and other hateful messages reported,” in 2020, of the “5,125 cases of reported by the ADL ... 4,105 of the incidents, or 80 percent of all propaganda incidents nationwide” were perpetrated by Patriot Front.

In 2020 and 2021, the group has staged at least three events on the National Mall, all with heavy police escorts. As the ADL noted in their report, the largest “white supremacist event in 2020 involved approximately 10 Patriot Front members in a February flash demonstration on the National Mall in Washington D.C.”

An on-the-ground report by Zach Roberts of Visu.News at that time noted the extraordinary police protection provided to the fascists as they held a photo op in front of the US Capitol. Roberts writes that the fascists were “promptly allowed onto the grounds and members of the media and other watchers were prevented from following them. For about 10 minutes, the entirety of the lawn in front of Capitol Hill was shut off from everyone, save a Southern Poverty Law Center designated hate group. When asked why the police were preventing media from photographing, no one answered.”

Roberts continued: “I’ve covered rallies in Washington D.C. for nearly 20 years now. I’ve never seen a group allowed to have a private space protected by the police department and no one else was allowed in.”

Despite the fact that Patriot Front member Bryan Betancur is facing five charges for his role in the storming of the Capitol on January 6, mere weeks later, on January 29, 2021, dozens of Patriot Front fascists were allowed to march on the National Mall, also towards the Capitol.

According to the affidavit, Betancur was on parole for a previous robbery and was wearing a GPS ankle monitor as he breached the Capitol. After participating in the attack, he admitted to his probation officer that he was inside the Capitol and had been tear gassed by police. The affidavit claims that Betancur is a “self-professed white supremacist who has made statements to law enforcement officers that he is a member of several white supremacy organizations.”

“Betancur has voiced homicidal ideations, made comments about conducting a school shooting and has

researched mass shootings. Betancur voiced support for James Fields ... [he] has stated he wanted to run people over with a vehicle and kill people in a church,” per the affidavit. Despite Betancur’s previous offenses and known violent tendencies, his probation officer allowed him to travel from his home in Maryland to participate in Trump’s attempted coup because he claimed he was distributing “Bibles with an organization called Gideon International.”

Patriot Front maintains a website where it promotes its fascist marches, including several held so far this year. This past July, Rousseau and Patriot Front held a fascist march in downtown Philadelphia. However, the police escort for that march was not ample enough to prevent members of the community from chasing the scum out of town after roughly an hour.

This past June, in Philadelphia, Brooklyn, New York and Newark, New Jersey, several memorials and murals dedicated to George Floyd were vandalized by the group. That same month, in Portland, Oregon, a statue commemorating an enslaved black member of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, York, was also defaced by the fascist group. In each instance, stencils and spray paint were used to vandalize the art with fascist slogans promoting Patriot Front.

Despite the group’s nationwide vandalizing campaign, this reporter was unable to find any record of Patriot Front members being arrested for their crimes. This is despite the fact that the *Texas Observer* reported in 2018 that Rousseau has been under FBI surveillance since at least May 2017.



To contact the WSWWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)