

# Rein in the FBI: Put an End to the FBI’s “Gestapo Tactics”

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*[“One of the creeping hands of totalitarianism running through the democracy is the Federal Bureau of Investigation... Because why does the FBI do all this? To scare the hell out of people... They work for the establishment and the corporations and the politicians to keep things as they are. And they want to frighten and chill the people who are trying to change things.”](#)*—Howard Zinn, historian

Power corrupts. We know this.

In fact, we know this from experience learned the hard way at the hands of our own government.

So why is *anyone* surprised to learn that the FBI, one of the most power-hungry and corrupt agencies within the police state’s vast complex of power-hungry and corrupt agencies, [misused a massive government surveillance database more than 300,000 times](#) in order to target American citizens?

This is how the government operates, after all.

First, they seek out extraordinary powers acquired in the wake of some national crisis—in this case, [warrantless surveillance powers intended to help the government spy on foreign targets suspected of engaging in terrorism](#)—and then they use those powers against the American people.

According to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court, [the FBI repeatedly misused Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act](#) in order to spy on the communications of two vastly disparate groups of Americans: those involved in the George Floyd protests and those who may have taken part in the Jan. 6, 2021, protests at the Capitol.

This is par for the course for the FBI, whose *modus operandi* has historically been to

[“expose, disrupt, misdirect, discredit, or otherwise neutralize”](#) perceived threats to the government’s power.

Indeed, the FBI has a long history of persecuting, prosecuting and generally [harassing](#) activists, politicians, and cultural figures.

Back in the 1950s and ‘60s, the FBI’s [targets](#) were civil rights activists, those suspected of having Communist ties, and anti-war activists. In more recent decades, the FBI has expanded its reach to target so-called domestic extremists, environmental activists, and those who oppose the police state.

In 2019, President Trump promised to give the FBI [“whatever they need”](#) to investigate and disrupt hate crimes and domestic terrorism, without any apparent thought for the Constitution’s prohibitions on such overreach.

That misguided pledge sheds a curious light on the FBI’s ongoing spree of SWAT team raids, surveillance, disinformation campaigns, fear-mongering, paranoia, and strong-arm tactics meted out to dissidents on both the right and the left.

Yet while these overreaching, heavy-handed lessons in how to rule by force have become standard operating procedure for a government that communicates with its citizenry primarily through the language of brutality, intimidation and fear, none of this is new.

Indeed, the FBI’s love affair with totalitarianism can be traced back to the Nazi police state.

As historian Robert Gellately [recounts](#), the Nazi police state was so [admired](#) for its efficiency and order by the [world powers](#) of the day that in the decades after World War II, the FBI, along with other government agencies, aggressively [recruited at least a thousand Nazis](#), including some of Hitler’s highest henchmen.

Since then, U.S. government agencies—the FBI, CIA and the military—have fully embraced many of the Nazi’s well-honed policing tactics, and used them repeatedly against American citizens.

With every passing day, the United States government borrows yet another leaf from Nazi Germany’s playbook: [Secret police](#). Secret courts. Secret government agencies. Surveillance. Censorship. Intimidation. Harassment. Torture. Brutality. Widespread corruption. Entrapment. Indoctrination. Indefinite detention.

These are not tactics used by constitutional republics, where the rule of law and the rights of the citizenry reign supreme. Rather, they are the hallmarks of authoritarian regimes, where secret police control the populace through intimidation, fear and official lawlessness on the part of government agents.

Consider the extent to which the FBI’s far-reaching powers to surveil, detain, interrogate, investigate, prosecute, punish, police and generally act as a law unto themselves resemble those of [their Nazi cousins](#), the Gestapo.

*Just like the Gestapo, the FBI has vast resources, vast investigatory powers, and [vast discretion to determine who is an enemy of the state](#).*

*Much like the [Gestapo spied on mail and phone calls](#), FBI agents have carte blanche access*

to the citizenry's most personal information.

*Much like the Gestapo's sophisticated surveillance programs, the FBI's spying capabilities can delve into Americans' most intimate details (and allow local police to do so, as well).*

*Much like the Gestapo's ability to profile based on race and religion, and its assumption of [guilt by association](#), the FBI's approach to pre-crime allows it to profile Americans based on a broad range of characteristics including race and religion.*

*Much like the Gestapo's power to render anyone an enemy of the state, the FBI has the power to label anyone a domestic terrorist.*

*Much like the Gestapo infiltrated communities in order to spy on the German citizenry, the FBI routinely infiltrates political and religious groups, as well as businesses.*

*Just as the Gestapo united and militarized Germany's police forces into a national police force, America's police forces have largely been federalized and turned into a national police force.*

*Just as the Gestapo carried out entrapment operations, the FBI has become a master in the art of entrapment.*

*Just as the [Gestapo's secret files](#) on political leaders were used to intimidate and coerce, the FBI's attempts to target and spy on anyone suspected of "anti-government" sentiment have been similarly abused.*

The Gestapo became the terror of the Third Reich by creating a sophisticated surveillance and law enforcement system that relied for its success on the cooperation of the military, the police, the intelligence community, neighborhood watchdogs, government workers for the post office and railroads, ordinary civil servants, and a nation of snitches inclined to report "[rumors, deviant behavior, or even just loose talk](#)."

Likewise, as countless documents make clear, the FBI has had no qualms about using its extensive powers in order to blackmail politicians, [spy on celebrities](#) and [high-ranking government officials](#), and [intimidate and attempt to discredit dissidents](#) of all stripes.

In fact, borrowing heavily from the Gestapo, between 1956 and 1971, the FBI conducted an intensive domestic intelligence program, termed COINTELPRO, [intended to neutralize domestic political dissidents](#). As Congressman Steve Cohen explains, "COINTELPRO was set up to surveil and disrupt groups and movements that the FBI found threatening... many groups, including anti-war, student, and environmental activists, and the New Left were [harassed, infiltrated, falsely accused of criminal activity](#) ."

Sound familiar? The more things change, the more they stay the same.

Those [targeted by the FBI](#) under COINTELPRO for its intimidation, surveillance and smear campaigns included: Martin Luther King Jr., Malcom X, the Black Panther Party, Billie Holiday, Emma Goldman, Aretha Franklin, Charlie Chaplin, Ernest Hemingway, Felix Frankfurter, John Lennon, and hundreds more.

The Church Committee, the Senate task force charged with investigating COINTELPRO abuses in 1975, denounced the government's abuses:

“Too many people have been spied upon by too many Government agencies and too much information has been collected. The Government has often undertaken the secret surveillance of citizens on the basis of their political beliefs, even when those beliefs posed no threat of violence or illegal acts on behalf of a hostile foreign power.”

The report continued:

“Groups and individuals have been harassed and disrupted because of their political views and their lifestyles. Investigations have been based upon vague standards whose breadth made excessive collection inevitable. Unsavory and vicious tactics have been employed—including anonymous attempts to break up marriages, disrupt meetings, ostracize persons from their professions, and provoke target groups into rivalries that might result in deaths. Intelligence agencies have served the political and personal objectives of presidents and other high officials.”

Whether 50 years ago or in the present day, the treatment being doled out by the government’s lethal enforcers has remained consistent, no matter the threat.

The FBI’s laundry list of crimes against the American people includes surveillance, disinformation, blackmail, entrapment, intimidation tactics, harassment and indoctrination, governmental overreach, abuse, misconduct, trespassing, enabling criminal activity, and damaging private property, and that’s just based on what we know.

Whether the FBI is planting undercover agents in churches, synagogues and mosques; issuing fake emergency letters to gain access to Americans’ phone records; using [intimidation tactics](#) to silence Americans who are critical of the government; [recruiting high school students to spy on and report fellow students](#) who show signs of being future terrorists; or persuading impressionable individuals to plot acts of terror and then [entrapping them](#), the overall impression of the nation’s secret police force is that of a well-dressed thug, flexing its muscles and doing the boss’ dirty work of ensuring compliance, keeping tabs on potential dissidents, and punishing those who dare to challenge the status quo.

As I make clear in my book [Battlefield America: The War on the American People](#) and in its fictional counterpart [The Erik Blair Diaries](#), it’s time to rein in the Federal Bureau of Intimidation’s war on political freedom.

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