

What To Do When Patriot Front Shows Up

Task Force Butler Institute's Guide for Anti-Fascist Researchers and
Community Safety Practitioners

Task Force Butler Institute is publishing this “Street Teams Guide” for Anti-Fascist Researchers and Community Safety Practitioners to make participation in coordinated, effective anti-fascist research more accessible to everyone. Please see <https://taskforcebutler.org/streetteams> for the latest version.

Patriot Front's Co-opting of Perceived “Ideologically Friendly” Events like “March for Life”

The neo-nazi Patriot Front gang, led by Thomas Rousseau, has a history of attempting to co-opt marches and protests by rightwing political and advocacy organizations such as “March for Life,” the anti-choice group that hosts yearly events to coincide with the January 20th anniversary of the Roe v. Wade decision. In 2022, Rousseau led Patriot Front at two March for Life events: a satellite March for Life event in Chicago on January 8, then the main event in Washington, DC on January 20.

Patriot Front has three primary objectives at these events:

1. To instill fear in targeted populations: religious and ethnic minorities, immigrants, the LGBTQIA+ community, and women.
2. To co-opt the attention of the media drawn by rightwing organizers and those protesting against them.
3. To recruit in-person and online from a captive audience who they believe to be sympathetic and persuadable to embracing fascist ideology.

Local Researchers' Preparation Before Expected Patriot Front Activity:

1. Proactively contact local antifascist researchers and community safety groups, as well as national monitoring organizations like Task Force Butler ahead of your event. Provide to them any evidence you may have that makes you suspect Patriot Front will be present

during an upcoming event.

2. Ensure that organizers involved in the event that you expect to be targeted are familiar with Patriot Front, their tactics, and their history of co-opting earned media to detract from the event. Contact organizers to make sure that they have a plan to prevent Patriot Front from entering permitted space or otherwise ingratiating themselves with the event.
3. Identify local U-Haul, Penske, and other truck-rental locations, and advise them that a white supremacist organization will likely be using their services in order to harass and intimidate protected communities in your area. Inform nearby hardware stores/chains that Patriot Front typically makes a large purchase of galvanized pipe (conduit) to use as weapons disguised as flagpoles, only to return them to get rid of evidence. Ideally this is done via e-mail or recorded phone call.
4. Review any publicly released information about the event and determine most likely avenues of approach for Patriot Front. Patriot Front prefers wide, high-visibility sidewalks that they can march on while in formation, public parks, and/or low vehicle traffic streets they can safely march through with a police escort. Consider metro stations and areas that can be used for rapid pick-ups by convoys of vehicles. Have a plan to be in place at key locations with cameras before police lock down metro entrances or loading areas to facilitate Patriot Front's exfil.
5. If organizers feel comfortable approaching or coordinating with local law enforcement, informing them about Patriot Front and their intent to intimidate or harass event participants can prevent Patriot Front from manipulating local law enforcement perception. Inform local law enforcement that this gang carries metal shields and flagpoles to use as offensive weapons, and that they frequently illegally discharge pyrotechnics. Do not assume that local law enforcement understands what Patriot Front is or how they've operated in the past.
6. Ensure team members are aware of all local, state, and federal laws related to typical Patriot Front activity. Be prepared to call the appropriate authorities and cite these specific laws if you witness Patriot Front engaging in illegal behavior. We recommend you document any reports that you submit to law enforcement.
 - 6.1. Potentially illegal behavior that Patriot Front frequently engages in, depending on local jurisdiction:
 - 6.1.1. Use of pyrotechnics
 - 6.1.2. Riding in the back of a truck without seatbelts
 - 6.1.3. Carrying weapons and wearing armor



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- 6.1.4. Metal shields can be used as deadly striking and slashing weapons, and Patriot Front has an established history of using them to attack victims.
- 6.1.5. Nearly all Patriot Front members wear armor under their baseball caps.
- 6.1.6. Gang membership/activity
- 6.2. Of note are Federal statutes and laws that may pertain to Patriot Front activity:
[Source link - FBI](#)
 - 6.2.1. Title 18, U.S.C., Section 249 - Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr., Hate Crimes Prevention Act
 - 6.2.2. Title 18, U.S.C., Section 241 - Conspiracy Against Rights
 - 6.2.2.1. *It is “unlawful for two or more persons to go in disguise on the highway or on the premises of another with the intent to prevent or hinder his/her free exercise or enjoyment of any rights so secured.”*
 - 6.2.3. Title 18, U.S.C., Section 245 - Federally Protected Activities
7. If desired, establish connections with journalists, local and/or national, who may be interested in your local group’s activities to research and counter extremists in your community. If journalists who are present to cover your event do not appear to know what Patriot Front is or the threat they pose, encourage them to contact organizations like the SPLC or Task Force Butler that can provide them with useful context in a timely manner.

Patriot Front’s Activity on the Day of Event

1. Historically, Patriot Front members will gather at a makeshift campground the day prior to a planned event, where they will practice marching and melee combat using their shields and sticks disguised as flagpoles.
2. Immediately before the event, Patriot Front will utilize public transportation or travel by convoy (rental trucks or personal vehicles with license-plates covered) to get their personnel to the location of their planned activism. Their flash-mob style activity typically relies on AT LEAST one rental truck driven by Patriot Front members to transport their weapons, shields and flags to and from the event.
3. Patriot Front typically utilizes spotters/scouts who monitor the drop-off location and route prior to the arrival of the main group. In the past, these spotters/scouts have been



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dressed in Patriot Front uniforms with their white gaiter around their necks instead of pulled up to cover their faces. They may use baofeng radios to communicate with Patriot Front drivers and ground commanders.

4. Patriot Front's tactics for infil/exfil at a location will often change based on community defense response to their presence.
5. Typical Patriot Front activism directly targets either adversarial or ideologically aligned public events. For example, Patriot Front has consistently attended the annual March For Life event in Washington D.C.
 - 5.1. When targeting adversarial public events, they will likely gather within a half mile radius of the event, march in a non-direct route towards the event, and attempt to find a highly visible location in the direct vicinity of the event while using pyrotechnics and loudspeakers to spread propaganda and intimidate adversaries.
 - 5.2. Though they espouse non-violent intent, Patriot Front members will actively look to antagonize adversaries and, if possible, surround and attack individuals with shields and flagpoles. ***We advise that individuals do not directly approach Patriot Front members marching as a group as you will likely be physically assaulted.***
6. When conducting public en mass activism, Patriot Front often brings at least two individuals responsible for producing visual media and propaganda for the group. Patriot Front's propaganda team are typically identified by their yellow construction vests over the standard Patriot Front uniform.
 - 6.1. These individuals will film everyone who engages with Patriot Front members, and in the past, this footage has been used to target or doxx their adversaries. They typically use this footage to produce video summaries of their activism, and will intentionally make Patriot Front look non-violent, widely accepted by locals and law enforcement, and if violence occurs they will present the situation as if they are the victims rather than the perpetrators of violent activity.
 - 6.2. Many members of Patriot Front, including those carrying shields as weapons, also don body-worn cameras to record and produce deceptively-edited propaganda.
7. Patriot Front has a documented relationship with law enforcement.
 - 7.1. Patriot Front frequently contacts local law enforcement anonymously as "concerned citizens" to "report" their presence in order to effectively gain a police



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escort while they march on public property.

- 7.2. If Patriot Front is present in the New England area, they may be accompanied by plain-clothed federal law enforcement agents who have been observed directly coordinating with and assisting Patriot Front in leaving an area after a march.
- 7.3. When Patriot Front members are arrested or prevented by law enforcement from accomplishing their activism, they typically carry no government issued identification and/or refuse to give their names. Historically, police officers are then deterred from making arrests so that they may avoid paperwork.

Actions Local Researchers can take on the Day of Patriot Front's Targeting of an Event:

Your day-of actions will be dictated by how much prior preparation you've conducted, the number of individuals assisting in monitoring/countering Patriot Front, and the complexity of the targeted event. What follows is a suggested approach to real time monitoring that will keep your team safe as well as create the most opportunities for gathering useful information for accountability measures.

1. Establish a communication strategy and command-structure ahead of time with your team. One person on the ground should be designated as the Team Leader who is charged with decision-making authority.
 - 1.1. Be mindful that cellphone reception can be severely limited in very large crowds. Consider additional communication and geo-location devices such as handheld radios and Apple AirTags.
 - 1.1.1. Decide on a limited number of communications methods for the team, and stick only to them so that team members don't miss messages. I.e.:
 - 1.1.1.1. Handheld radio for voice and Signal for text/images,
 - 1.1.1.2. Signal for voice and WhatsApp for text/images,
 - 1.1.1.3. Group Facetime for voice and Slack for text/images
 - 1.2. One or more members of your team should be designated as your "headquarters element," who will remain off-site.
 - 1.2.1. The headquarters element will help facilitate orderly team communications, keep an eye on social/traditional media (perform online OSINT), and monitor team members' live geo-location. Headquarters



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stays off-site at a static location until the operation is over to avoid distractions.

- 1.2.2. If headquarters consists of more than one person, they can be responsible for collecting videos, photos, and updates from the ground teams for posting on social media in real-time to keep the community informed about what is happening.
- 1.3. We recommend that those on the ground work in pairs.
 - 1.3.1. Ground team pairs should stay within eyesight of each other.
 - 1.3.2. One person can focus on navigation and communication with headquarters and other ground teams, while the other person is responsible for gathering video/photo evidence.
2. If your team is large enough, identify truck rental locations, and assign individuals to monitor each location or most likely locations early in the morning.
 - 2.1. NOTE: Patriot Front may acquire their rental truck a day or two ahead of the event date.
 - 2.2. *Patriot Front members who drive the rental truck will likely not pick up the vehicle while wearing their Patriot Front uniform. Ideally, individuals monitoring pick up locations will be familiar with the names and faces of known Patriot Front members.*
 - 2.3. Pairs are not necessary for static observation.
 - 2.4. These individuals should avoid direct engagement with Patriot Front members.
3. Position at least one individual near likely avenues of approach.
 - 3.1. These individuals should not be visibly affiliated with the event or any political/social organizations, and should focus on alerting organizers/the monitoring team as soon as Patriot Front is seen.
 - 3.2. When Patriot Front members are observed, other individuals should move towards the group, maintaining distance to avoid detection while relaying real time location information to organizers and the monitoring team. These individuals should avoid direct engagement with Patriot Front members.
4. If Patriot Front members are observed using public transportation to enter an area, we suggest a team of at least two individuals to immediately identify which public transit line



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was used, and attempt to check every prior possible stop along that line to locate Patriot Front vehicles and identify their rally point.

- 4.1. *Historically, Patriot Front will leave at least one individual behind to monitor for attempts to tamper with their vehicles. The parking lot minder will stage in their own vehicle wearing civilian clothing and will attempt to observe anyone who enters the parking area.*
- 4.2. *If a mass of vehicles are observed with license plates covered by tape or other means, immediately call 911 and report this as suspicious activity.*
- 4.3. Researchers should take BOTH videos and still photos of all suspected Patriot Front vehicles. Be sure to capture registration stickers and VIN stamps on windshields, bumper stickers, contents within vehicles, and all other distinguishing features.
 - 4.3.1. Remember: a license plate can be traded in for a replacement at the DMV, but a VIN is forever associated with the vehicle.
5. During Patriot Front's attempted co-opting of the event, we suggest that anyone not directly monitoring and updating the group's location focus on helping event participants avoid the group by rerouting participants in transit to/from the event in coordination with organizers.
 - 5.1. *We suggest encouraging event participants to avoid vocal arguments with Patriot Front, as these interactions will be recorded by Patriot Front and may be used to target participants later on.*
6. We encourage documenting as much of the Patriot Front activity as possible, with a special emphasis on identifying features of individual Patriot Front members.
 - 6.1. Though the similar uniforms are meant to obscure their identities, each member of Patriot Front has distinguishing characteristics that researchers can cross-reference with other evidence and use to identify them and map individuals' activity.
 - 6.1.1. Details include: type/color boots, color/fit pants, color/type belts, regional Patriot Front patches on shirts/jackets/hats, presence and location of velcro on any of the above, etc.
 - 6.2. We advise observers to use newer cell phones and high-resolution digital cameras to collect this documentation. After Patriot Front leaves, ensure that all collected evidence of their activity is centralized within a cloud database



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controlled by your local research unit, and then shared with national tracking organizations like Task Force Butler.

- 6.3. This documentation is vital for researchers and legal accountability practitioners to help prove that specific individuals were present during specific activity.

What to do After the Event:

A ground operation, especially a successful one, can and should be an exhilarating experience. After the operation is concluded, the team should get together in a comfortable and social environment to discuss the day's events. If at all possible, the team should take notes during this discussion – as you might have fleeting “eureka moments” as each person shares their observations from their unique perspectives.

Unless you witnessed criminal activity that you need to report, there's likely nothing you need to do *immediately*, other than interacting with your team or journalists who you've already established a relationship with.

Team Leaders or organizers should use this time to check in with every member of the team and ensure they are physically and mentally okay after this activity, and should clearly communicate what next steps will be taken. Observation work like this can be exhausting and takes long hours, so ensuring that your team is well fed, hydrated, and understands the overall picture of the day's event is paramount.

Team Leaders should ensure that all photos, videos, and notes from each participant are uploaded to their central repository for review and analysis in the following days.

We encourage everyone to avoid posting content on social media that would show that you were physically located in the area during the event or that reveals your role in observing Patriot Front activity. While the urge to share your work with your community in person and online is understandable, immediately after an activity is when Patriot Front members will be most focused on documenting their adversaries. We encourage you to hold off for at least one week before sharing content publicly on social media. We also encourage observers to do a security sweep of their own social media accounts to ensure that they cannot be used to identify yourself, your family, your friends, and your peers.



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