

Learning From Portland

Black Flag Catalyst

7/16/2020

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Foreword

My city: Portland, Oregon is currently under siege from an occupying force. Make no mistake in assuming the state will hesitate to occupy other cities with their militant, violent force, for less than reasonable reason(s). It's spread to Columbus, Ohio, and Miami. We learned from Standing Rock, the state uses protests as a testing ground for what they can do at other protests.

When it happens, please take into account the following lessons I've learned from nights of protest interacting with federal agents and police:

Snatch Vans

Federal agents in Portland, Oregon drove around in unmarked vans, randomly selecting people to abduct, arrest, and search. The majority of these vans are black, grey, or white. They all seem to be rentals given the majority of their plates being out-of-state. Feds seem to have a particular affinity for GMC Yukons and Chrysler Pacificas, though there's no reason for them to stick with just those cars and that may change.

Typically they drive around for the block for a bit, seemingly looking for someone to take. A general criteria *might* include: **Being alone**, doing something supposedly "illegal" (like standing too close to a federal building or a statue), looking "suspicious" or vulnerable (being Black, femme, dressed in black bloc, etc.), not being near a camera or journalist, not being near a National Lawyers Guild volunteer, or being somewhere nearby the road or a parking lot so they don't have to stray too far from their car. These are just assumptions from the author. The actual criteria may be much longer, or much shorter.

After they've decided on someone to take in, they stop their car as close to the person as possible, and a group of them piles out of the van. They approach the person without making any statements, grab them, and drag them into the van without identifying themselves, why the person is being abducted, and without even handcuffing the person they're arresting. They drag them as quickly as possible and seem to get nervous around having their face shown.

Once in the car, victims of abduction have recalled being, quote: "blinded" (using the victims clothing as a blindfold), and their belongings are searched. One victim said that the feds looked through his belongings and in frustration of finding no physical evidence to justify escalation or arrest exclaimed: "this is a whole lot of nothing." The victim was then driven around downtown and dropped off at a prison cell, where he was shortly released upon refusing to answer the cops questions. Snatch vans also may serve to rattle and demoralize the individual as well as the group more though that seems secondary to searching people(s) bags and such.

Solutions

Affinity Groups

Form an affinity group. An affinity group is a group of friends or trusted people who you protest alongside with rather than protesting individually. At all times stay with your affinity group. Do not go out alone unless it's completely impossible to form one or absolutely necessary. If you can't find an affinity group, you see someone without an affinity group, or you lose your

group, stand nearby to them. Take care of each other as much as possible. When vans which may be federal agents arrive, stay tight. Stand nearby to each other and hold the line.

NLG

Stand nearby to NLG (National Lawyers Guild) volunteers. Typically identifiable by shirts/hats showing off that they're here to watch over the protests and watch police/federal action.

Boring Bloc

Police and federal agents have deemed anyone dressed in black bloc to be a "violent anarchist" and will use it as justification for arrest and abuse. Perhaps, (if it can be coordinated in your area) it's time to leave black bloc behind in favour of boring bloc. Dress in something like grey hoodies, blue jeans, black shoes. Continue the point of black bloc of confusing police and blending into a crowd, but change out black bloc's aesthetic. When in black bloc, or boring bloc, do not stand where you're the only one dressed in such a way. Stand by your comrades also disguising themselves.

No Evidence, No Crime

Do not unnecessarily carry anything incriminating on your person, unless absolutely necessary for your survival. These will be found if arrested and used as justification for your abduction.

Identify Snatch Vans

Identify snatch vans. Any car you see driving around with federal agents inside can be assumed to be one. Take down the type of car, the color of the car, the license plate number, and where the license plate is from. Make a list of them like the one I've put below and distribute it as much as possible. Spread awareness of affinity groups and of cars to especially look out for. If you see a car which has been identified as a snatch van near you, leave the area and head to another area of protest.

List of identified snatch vans in Portland, Oregon

- Unknown car, Florida, CHUR57
- GMC Yukon, California, 6T70903
- GMC Yukon, unmarked plates
- GMC Yukon, California 7WLTH79
- GMC Yukon, unmarked plates
- Chrysler Pacifica, Washington, BTA2333
- GMC Yukon, California, 6WGR263
- GMC Yukon, plates not clear, rental

- Chrysler Pacifica, Oregon, 049LKU

Excessive Use Of Munitions And Force

Federal agents and police together have been seen brutalizing bystanders or protesters simply passing by, aimed and fired their supposedly “less-lethal” rounds not only at people, but at people’s heads (which can, one-hundred percent kill someone), and drawn their guns due to them being fucking pussies and getting scared when people heckled them.

On July 16th, at 12 AM on the dot and almost exactly one hour after (implying it may be replanned), federal agents (without **any** warning or demands) unleashed an ungodly amount of tear gas and pepper balls alongside the police. Federal agents used a fuck-ton of their typical unlimited munitions, and police, alongside the federal agents used what’s called a gas ladle. A long stick with a bucket on the end, that when lit can let off even more CS tear gas than bombs. Furthermore, feds explicitly use CS tear gas, which is much stronger than its softer brother which police forces typically use to quell uprisings.

On the night prior to that, federal agents unleashed “ninebangs” a type of stun grenade (also known as a flashbang) designed to go off multiple times continuously. These aren’t just dangerous for the same reasons your typical flashbangs are, but because under wet conditions (like the rain that the Pacific Northwest is really well known for) they can explode releasing projectiles and shrapnel in the same way any typical shrapnel grenade does.

Federal agents and police also worked together to “kettle” protesters. Trapping them on all four sides with fencing, police vans, and federal agents. This, given federal agents’ ability to kill and brutalize with no repercussion, is an *extremely* dangerous situation, especially given federal agents, (according to the executive order signed by the president), have the ability to fire live rounds on protesters seen tampering with federal property, or with statues. They’ve shown themselves to jump at the chance to beat up on protesters, we don’t place murder above them.

Federal agents had at least one sniper nest on top of the justice center. It’s unclear if this sniper had live-rounds or pepper balls, or tear gas, etc. what is known is that it’s really dangerous. Federal agents demonstrated to have at least one military drone. These drones serve to monitor or watch crowds, and can be dangerous if falling out of the sky or if flying towards someone.

Solutions

Be Unexpected

On the night of July 16th, there were at least two protests in Portland. One at the MCSO, (Multnomah County Sheriff’s Office) and one at the jc (justice center). Nights prior most protests had occurred at the jc, as a result almost all of the police presence was at the jc, and no federal presence was at the MCSO. Only ten police stood at MCSO initially. Further, the decision to protest at MCSO was made on the spot of the protest. A speaker asked the crowd what we wanted to do and we proceeded to have a group discussion, meaning police and feds couldn’t have known where we were going until the last second. Comparatively, the protest at MCSO had much, much greater success than the one at the jc due to limited police presence.

One thing which may make snap decisions like this easier are apps such as bridgify, an app serving as a walkie talkie for anyone nearby to you. Also, airdrop information on where the

protests are going. Generally, spread information in such a way such that police and federal agents can't find it.

Further, MCSO is located in a white, rich neighborhood. Police there weren't even wearing gas masks because they weren't willing to tear gas in a white, rich neighborhood. Instead they bull rushed the crowd, still dangerous, but a lot better than breathing in more gas. Organize in areas like this as much as possible. Take the fight to them.

Don't be Kettled

Do not stand in areas such as an intersection where federal agents and police can block off every route of your escape. Do not stand still on two-way streets waiting for both sides to be cut off by police. Stand in areas with both mobility, and the ability to quickly leave when it seems police are trying to kettle you. Do not ever, needlessly stand still just waiting to be brutalized and for no other reason. Only temporarily stay static, the protest can't be a solid object, it has to blob around the city as much as possible.

Be Like Water

Federal munitions like tear gas can cover large areas and they can pull from their unlimited supply of it as much as they like. Because of this, "staying together," and "staying tight" just means everyone gets gassed. Instead, be able to split and spread apart in certain situations, (such as when running from feds shooting tear gas) and stay tight in others (when forming back together after running, when forming a line, when you see snatch vans or police/feds moving in to arrest someone, etc.)

This means being coordinated and controlled. This means keep protests united. No cop-jacketing, (assuming another person to be a cop with no evidence) no infighting, and kicking out anyone who's there to stir shit up. We're all in this together, comrades.

Always Be Ready

Feds fire without rhyme, reason, or demand. They'll fire from two feet in front of you, from buildings across the street, or from across the park. They're always ready and itching to brutalize, and unlike police they haven't had fifty days tiring them out.

Blind Them

We know feds have at least one federal agent in a sniper's nest. We also know police and federal agents are big fans of roof cops. We also know police and federal agents like to shine bright, blinding lights on protesters, and protesters have our own bright, blinding light and laser pointers.

Regarding snipers and roof cops, one very effective strategy might be to blind them with bright lights and laser pointers, which we have. We've also made reflective shields using tin-foil and other reflective surfaces which we've used to shine the feds lights back at them. Not only is this good for roof cops, but blinding on-the-ground federal agents obviously can help with fucking up their aim.

Furthermore, you may find lights useful for blinding drones which are monitoring the crowd, and for blinding cameras which are recording people's faces, clothing, and especially shoes.

No Excuses

Do not needlessly give the feds any excuses to brutalize you. They will immediately jump on it. I'm not telling you not to fuck with statues. I'm telling you to be careful which ones you fuck with. Your actions determine the entire crowd's safety. Again, do not do anything which might break the rules in the executive order signed by the president, giving permission to federal agents to fire live rounds into the crowd.

Undoubtedly federal agents will use any excuse possible to brutalize and murder. Do not needlessly give them one.

Also though, keep in mind federal agents will literally make up excuses and justifications. For example, they claim on the 16th there were "violent anarchists" tagging buildings. Not one credible journalist has reported on that though. Not one protester I've spoken to has seen it happen.

Do Not Fight Them

This should go without saying, but your average teenager in black bloc will get our shit smashed in by feds. As stated above, the point should be to lure them out, to run around, to waste their time, and to out-smart them. We cannot out-force them without our own militias. That's a legitimate possibility at this point, but outside of that, don't engage with them.

Police And Feds Are The Same

Don't be fooled by copaganda and attempts to distance themselves from homeland security, police and federal agents are one in the same. They might pose for pictures separately, but they march together. They work together. Any sign of police is a sign of federal agents, and vice versa.

Don't Be Cocky

Portland has seen fifty continuous nights of protests and uprisings. Over this time I can confidently say I've grown much more confident in fucking with the cops. This has led to a more than significant confidence boost, and I feel almost worryingly happy to see police. Don't be fooled though, just because feds and police are part of the same oppressive state force, doesn't mean feds will go as light as the police. Federal agents will abuse you. Come into it with the understanding you might get the shit beat out of you tonight if you aren't overly careful.

Further Reading

The Black Flag Catalyst Protest Guide v1.2

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