



Ted Cruz and Donald Trump Want to Make America a Police State After Brussels

Betsy Woodruff and Tim Mak

March 22, 2016

We didn't even have a body count in Brussels before Ted Cruz and Donald Trump started calling for a police-state trial run in America.

Within hours of the bombs there that left dozens dead and more wounded, the top two Republican presidential candidates here were duking it out to see who could pitch the most authoritarian crackdown on Muslim Americans.

It's not surprising. Over the past eight months, overt Islamophobia has become part of mainstream Republican thinking. Though it isn't written into the party platform, the majority of Republican primary voters currently back presidential candidates pushing to marginalize American Muslims—and who have hired America's most virulently xenophobic voices to advise them.

This is a major rhetorical departure from the era of George W. Bush, who quoted the Quran in a mosque as part of post-9/11 Muslim outreach. And it indicates that Republican candidates now see significant electoral benefits to be found in demonizing an entire faith.

Both leading Republican candidates endorsed having law enforcement officials crack down on Muslim neighborhoods—not because their residents are radical, but *to prevent* potential radicalization.

Just hours after the bombings, Trump went on NBC's Today and reiterated his support of torture and fear of immigrants.

“Frankly, the waterboarding, if it was up to me, and if we changed the laws or had the laws, waterboarding would be fine,” Trump said of the recently apprehended suspect in the Paris attacks. “If they could expand the laws, I would do a lot more than waterboarding.”

Cruz, remarkably, went even further. He issued a statement a few hours after the bombings calling for enhanced police presence in Muslim-American neighborhoods so their inhabitants wouldn’t become terrorists—in other words, for institutional Islamophobia.

“We need to empower law enforcement to patrol and secure Muslim neighborhoods before they become radicalized,” he said.

On CNN a few hours later, Trump said he concurred.

In an email, Cruz spokeswoman Catherine Frazier added that Cruz favors preemptively sending police into neighborhoods because of their inhabitants’ beliefs.

“We know what is happening with these isolated Muslim neighborhoods in Europe,” she said. “If we want to prevent it from happening here, it is going to require an empowered, visible law enforcement presence that will both identify problem spots and partner with non-radical Americans who want to protect their homes.”

Frazier also said the Obama administration refuses to recognize radical Islamic terrorism as a threat because “they are afraid of being labeled ‘politically incorrect.’”

She praised the New York City Police Department’s efforts after the 9/11 attacks to monitor Muslims—which is particularly rich, given that the head of the NYPD just ripped Cruz over those comments.

When asked if that meant Cruz favored re-implementing that NYPD surveillance, and if he thinks law enforcement should be more active in neighborhoods with high Muslim populations, Frazier replied, “Law enforcement should patrol wherever there may be threats, it is their job.”

It’s a classic example of trying use a crisis to please your political base, Rep. André Carson, a Muslim American and a Democratic member of the House Intelligence Committee, told The Daily Beast.

“Given a time like a presidential year, you’re going to have many of the candidates who use [terrorist attacks] as an opportunity,” sighed Carson. “The sad reality is that when these acts are perpetrated, there will be people who cast broad aspersions about Muslims and make pretty bold statements that this is what Islam represents.”

Cruz’s call to “secure Muslim neighborhoods”—as if they’re dangerous and out of control—isn’t surprising. That’s because while most media coverage of 2016 Islamophobia has (understandably) focused on Trump, the Texan has quietly helped legitimize Islamophobic

voices—and has given a veneer of Constitutionality to the idea of singling out Muslims for their beliefs.

We saw this coming.

For years, Ted Cruz has publicly associated himself with former Reagan official Frank Gaffney, a crackpot conspiracy theorist who has never seen a Muslim he didn't think was secretly trying to infiltrate the government. Gaffney was a Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for a few years. But he lost his cachet in the Pentagon and then started a think tank, the Center for Security Policy, that peddles goofball conspiracy theories and bad data.

Since then, Gaffney has pimped some truly intriguing notions about current events—including but not limited to the idea that anti-tax activist Grover Norquist is a secret mole for the Muslim Brotherhood; that Obama is the country's first Muslim president; that Huma Abedin is a secret mole for the Muslim Brotherhood; that the Muslim Brotherhood had made inroads in CPAC leadership (see a pattern?); that Obama was maybe actually born in Kenya; and that a redesign of the Missile Defense Agency's logo was an insidious sign of "submission to Shariah by President Obama and his team."

And as a Senator, Cruz appeared on Gaffney's radio show and at his events.

"Frank Gaffney, the one and only," the senator said at one event, "you are a clarion voice for truth."

So when news broke last week that Cruz made Gaffney a member of his campaign's national security advisory team, it wasn't a huge shock.

Reputable conservatives, including the organizers of the influential Conservative Political Action Conference, previously decided they didn't want to associate with Gaffney. The board of the American Conservative Union condemned his assertions about Norquist, and for a time he was largely banished from the company of serious conservatives—cast into the outer dark. But now he's back, on board with the Cruz Crew.

And not everyone likes it. At least one individual was recently asked to join Cruz's campaign as a national security advisor and declined due to Gaffney's views.

"The fact that the Cruz campaign is legitimating some of these hateful views that Gaffney and some of his acolytes are espousing makes it impossible for me to be on the same team," the source told The Daily Beast. "I cannot in good conscience associate myself with those views and actively promote them."

"From my conversations, there is a pretty hefty amount of people who are disturbed by this, this normalization of Gaffney's views," the source added.

Gaffney isn't the only Cruz advisor to tout theories better suited for internet forums and YouTube comments. The senator also snapped up Clare Lopez for his national security team. Lopez is a vice president at Gaffney's Center for Security Policy, and earlier in March she said Joseph McCarthy "absolutely was spot-on in just about everything he said about the levels of [communist] infiltration."

She brought McCarthy up as part of an argument that the Muslim Brotherhood has infiltrated the U.S. government to the same extent that McCarthy believed communists had.

"Brotherhood affiliates and associates and those connected to it are the go-to advisers, if not appointees, for the top levels of our national security in our government, in this administration for sure, but going back many decades, really, is the program of this Brotherhood," she said, according to audio the progressive research site Right Wing Watch saved.

Another prominent fear-monger on Cruz's official campaign team: retired Lt. Gen. William "Jerry" Boykin, who co-chairs the Vets for Ted coalition. In 2010, Right Wing Watch surfaced video of Boykin arguing that Muslims shouldn't have religious freedom.

"We need to realize that Islam itself is not just a religion—it is a totalitarian way of life," he said. "It's a legal system, Sharia law; it's a financial system; it's a moral code; it's a political system; it's a military system. It should not be protected under the First Amendment, particularly given that those following the dictates of the Quran are under an obligation to destroy our Constitution and replace it with Sharia law."

This, by the way, furthers the "clash of civilizations" narrative that ISIS loves to use in its propaganda.

And it's especially interesting because Cruz has made religious freedom central to his campaign.

When Houston's mayor tried to subpoena five Christian pastors' sermons in 2014, he was one of her noisiest critics, charging that her efforts would disembowel the First Amendment. He brings the issue up at just about every campaign stop, and has an entire page on his campaign website dedicated to the issue, boasting that he stood with Kim Davis and "[I]ed the way to preserve the words 'under God' in the Pledge of Allegiance at the U.S. Supreme Court." (PDF)

"If we cannot worship God, if we cannot live according to our faith and our dictates, all other liberties fade away," he said in one video clip on his campaign site. "Never have the threats to religious liberty been greater than they are right now and here today."

So it's a little curious that "empowered, visible law enforcement presence" targeting neighborhoods because of their inhabitants' faith doesn't concern him.

And that concerns some right-leaning Constitutional scholars.

“I’m very troubled by the vagueness,” said Adam Bates, a criminal justice analyst at the libertarian Cato Institute. “If you were going to say something like that and make some implication that somehow law enforcement lacks the power to do what it needs to do, or that a certain community of Americans needs to be singled out for special scrutiny, I would expect an explanation of exactly what you mean.”

Bates added that Cruz name-checking the New York Police Department’s surveillance of American Muslims is also odd, saying that additional surveillance didn’t by itself make New Yorkers much safer—but did land the police department some pricey lawsuits. The AP reported in 2012 that six years into the covert program, the department’s surveillance turned up exactly zero leads.

In the Real Clear Politics average of national polls, 70 percent of Republicans currently back either Cruz and Trump—meaning the overwhelming majority of Republicans are on board with candidates who argue that all Muslims deserve suspicion, and that no policing can go too far. Think of it as Gaffney’s revenge.