

# WORLD NEWS GROUP

## Public demands answers from FBI

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At a hearing in Florida on Thursday, a lawyer for a coalition of media organizations tried to convince a judge to unseal documents related to the FBI's search of former President Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate.

"The public interest could not be greater," attorney Chuck Tobin said. At the same hearing, Jay Bratt, the head of the Justice Department's counterintelligence division summarized, "This is a volatile situation."

The FBI has had to deal with that volatility since last week's search, which has become a political flashpoint. Lawmakers on both sides of the aisle agree the agency should release further information, but the Justice Department has warned that making more details public would compromise an undisclosed ongoing investigation.

In a joint bulletin, the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security warned of an increase in online chatter about a civil war or armed rebellion since the Mar-a-Lago search. The top trending hashtags on Truth Social, the social media platform founded by Trump, read "FBIcorruption" and "DefundTheFBI." Agents erected fences around FBI headquarters in Washington and have bolstered security at all locations.

U.S. Magistrate Judge Bruce Reinhart, a Trump appointee, said he has received death threats since he signed the warrant, and the synagogue he attends canceled Shabbat services last week due to safety concerns. A crowd of armed protesters marched outside an FBI office in Phoenix, Ariz, over the weekend.

A Navy veteran armed with an AR-15 rifle and a nail gun attacked an FBI building in Cincinnati on Aug. 11. Ricky Shiffer, 42, tried to barge through a visitor screening area and then ran away. He died in a gunfire exchange with state troopers on the highway a short time later. Shiffer's posts on Truth Social threatened to kill FBI agents and urged people to exact revenge for the FBI raid.

Another man in Pennsylvania faces felony charges for posting threats against the FBI. Accounts believed to belonging to Adam Bies, 46, show posts on the online chat forum Gab claiming that

anyone working with the FBI was corrupt and deserved to die. According to court documents, he allegedly posted on Aug. 11, "I'm ready for the inevitable. My only goal is to kill more of them before I drop."

In an interview with Fox News, Trump said some threats went too far and, "the temperature needs to come down." He said he offered the help of his staff in cooperating with the DOJ, but he said the anger indicates a need for reform: "It is a very dangerous time for our country. People aren't going to stand for another scam."

Louis Price, a former military intelligence officer and FBI special agent, said the nighttime search with a heavily armed presence struck him as more of a political statement than a necessary action. During his experience, he said, such raids would only be ordered for violent crimes, whereas suspected illegal documents would fall under a white collar classification.

"It was a very dramatic action, obviously geared toward getting media attention," Price told me. "It's disappointing to those of us who served for so many years that the FBI is now being used in this manner."

He said reacting with violence is a step too far, but the threats also indicate to him that the FBI has work to do to restore trust with the public. "When you don't trust the FBI, people think that they have to become more of a vigilante to enforce what they think is the right way to do things."

Patrick Eddington, former CIA analyst and current senior fellow at the Cato Institute, agreed that recent scandals involving high-ranking FBI officials have wounded the agency's reputation. But he said calling the organization a political tool is one of several "fact-free allegations."

"I've been in Washington for over 30 years, and it gets tiresome to listen to people on the right and the left whine about agencies getting politicized," Eddington said. "The FBI has been implicated in either showing bad judgment or getting involved in political matters when they should not have in almost every administration throughout history. The issue is whether or not the facts that they put before the court measure up to probable cause."

At Thursday's hearing, Reinhart said he was "not prepared to find the affidavit should be fully sealed." The DOJ has a week to submit proposals about what information it wants to redact and to explain why the public should not know that information. Lead prosecutor Bratt said the affidavit contains "substantial grand jury information." He said worried the release would scare off other witnesses. Once the proposals are in, Reinhart said he might confer with the Justice Department further before making a final decision on what the public gets to know.