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Tanner/The rule of law

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By now, we've all seen the pictures: police officers and sheriff's deputies wading into Houston's floodwaters to rescue people, exhausted from working 20-hour shifts, disregarding their own safety to help others. Nothing could be more emblematic of the tens of thousands of professional law-enforcement officers in this country who do a dangerous and underappreciated job every day.

That makes it even more disappointing that President Trump has chosen to reward and highlight law enforcement at its very worst.

First came the pardon of former Arizona sheriff Joe Arpaio. While some segments of the president's base cheered the move, it's hard to find a law officer who has shown more contempt for the law itself.

Arpaio was convicted of criminal contempt of court for blatantly disregarding the orders of a federal judge. This was not a close case. In fact, Arpaio openly bragged that he would refuse to comply with the judge's orders. The orders in question were designed to stop Arpaio from violating the Fourth Amendment rights of Arizona's Latino residents with mass racially based roundups on the mere suspicion that those targeted might be undocumented immigrants. In fact, two different federal judges found against Arpaio's office, citing constitutional violations that were "broad in scope, involve its highest ranking command staff, and flow into its management of internal affairs investigations" and saying that he had "willfully violated" court orders to correct those violations. That's a far cry from "just doing his job," as the president claimed.

Moreover, this was hardly the only time that "Sheriff Joe" has shown his disregard for Americans' constitutional rights. During his tenure as sheriff, at least 160 inmates died from brutality, neglect, suicide, disease, bad health, or old age in Arpaio's jails. In many cases we have no way of knowing the cause of death, because the sheriff's office never bothered to investigate.

While Arpaio's tough methods have won him applause from law-and-order advocates, most of the attention has focused on things like requiring inmates to wear pink underwear or limiting meals to bologna sandwiches. Less publicized are tactics such as forcing women to give birth while chained to their cots. Lawsuits allege that the unsanitary conditions and brutality in Arpaio's jails resulted in dozens of miscarriages.

And before Arpaio's supporters respond that those locked up in Arpaio's jails deserved what they got, we should note that most county-jail inmates are not dangerous felons but people

arrested for minor drug offenses or infractions such as drunk driving or failure to pay child support.

Altogether, settlements and lawsuits resulting from Arpaio's practices have cost Maricopa County taxpayers more than \$200 million. Moreover, while Arpaio found time to champion the birther movement, crime actually increased in the county during his tenure. Just recently it came to light that his office apparently neglected to pursue thousands of sex crimes.

This hardly makes Sheriff Joe a model law-enforcement officer.

Trump followed up the Arpaio pardon with a tweet recommending a new book by Milwaukee sheriff David Clarke. This would be the same Sheriff Clarke who has had 15 inmates die in his jail since 2008. One of those dead was a newborn. Guards repeatedly denied the mother's requests for help, and she received no medical attention for some two hours after she was forced to give birth alone in her cell. And according to a lawsuit, this wasn't the only time Sheriff Clarke replicated Arpaio's methods: His jail allegedly forced at least 40 pregnant women to wear "belly chains" and shackles while they were in labor.

Another death in Clarke's custody involved an inmate who died of severe dehydration after reportedly being denied water for six days. County officials have ruled the death a homicide, and it is currently under investigation.

And Clarke's lack of respect for the Constitution appears to extend to the First Amendment. He has called for the suppression of anti-Trump protests, saying, "There is no legitimate reason to protest the will of the people."

President Trump's failure to understand what good policing is all about should come as no surprise. The president himself has suggested that police should rough up suspects when they take them into custody. But this attitude, far from championing "law and order," is actually an insult to those brave and dedicated officers, like those in Houston, who perform their jobs every day with courage and character.

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