

Report: Team Biden ordered Postal Service inspectors to track gun rights activists

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The Biden administration ordered operatives employed by the U.S. Postal Service to monitor the activities of gun rights activists, a report said.

Heavily redacted records obtained by Cato Institute senior fellow Patrick Eddington detail how the the postal inspectors spied on the Second Amendment Proponents from September 2020 through April 2021, including through covert social media surveillance called the Internet Covert Operations Program (iCOP).

“The records provide a rare glimpse into the breadth and depth of the Postal Service’s surveillance apparatus, which Eddington said was capable of reaching into every home and business in the country,” Ryan Lovelace wrote in a [Sept. 25 report](#) for The Washington Times.

“The Postal Service cannot reliably deliver mail to my own home, yet they can find the money and people to effectively digitally spy at scale, including on Americans engaged in First Amendment-protected activities,” Eddington told the Times.

A redacted situational awareness bulletin released in response to Eddington’s Freedom of Information Act request showed the U.S. Postal Inspection Service tracked “peaceful armed protests” by Virginians demonstrating at a Second Amendment rally for “Lobby Day” in Richmond on Jan. 18, 2021.

“The gathering lasted approximately two hours, with members identifying themselves as affiliates of the Proud Boys, Boogaloo Bois and Last Sons of Liberty,” the postal inspectors’ bulletin said. “Counter-protesters from the Black Lives Matter movement also attended. With heavy law enforcement presence the demonstrations stayed peaceful in nature.”

Asked about its surveillance of Americans, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service said its inspectors are federal law enforcement officers charged with protecting Postal Service employees, infrastructure and customers.

“The U.S. Postal Inspection Service occasionally reviews publicly available information in order to assess potential safety or security threats to Postal Service employees, facilities, operations and infrastructure,” the agency said in a statement.

The Postal Service Inspector General said this year that the postal inspectors’ surveillance overstepped law enforcement authority and may not have had legal approval.

The inspectors disputed that conclusion: “We determined that certain proactive searches iCOP conducted using an open-source intelligence tool from February to April 2021 exceeded the Postal Inspection Service’s law enforcement authority,” the Postal Service watchdog said in a March audit. “Furthermore, we could not corroborate whether other work analysts completed from October 2018 through June 2021 was legally authorized.”

Eddington wants Congress’ oversight committees to investigate further and said he is appealing for the Postal Service to lift redactions on details of its spying on Americans.

He noted that the Postal Service kept a March 2021 bulletin largely censored, but Yahoo News already had published it without redactions. It showed postal inspectors examining “right-wing Parler and Telegram accounts” ahead of planned protests.

Eddington warned that people should not assume the Postal Service is the only federal agency snooping on their social media accounts.

Other private entities and state and local governments also have interests in tracking people’s social media usage.

The Dallas Morning News recently reported that at least 37 colleges had purchased a social media surveillance tool called Social Sentinel since 2015 and many had used it to track students’ posts, including about protests on campuses.