



Texas Department of Public Safety, Bureau of Information Analysis

Situation Report

Report# 2008-01-0013 (February, 7, 2008)

CodePink Expanding Their Issues Focusing on Law Enforcement Deportation Policies

Summary

The Austin chapter of CodePink, an anti-war organization known for staging disruptive protests, is reportedly making plans to stage a protest against the Travis County Sheriff's Office regarding the agency's recent illegal alien deportation policy to provide office space for immigration officers.

Details

Information has been received that the Austin chapter of CodePink may be planning to hold demonstrations against the Travis County Sheriff's Office as a result of the sheriff's recent decision to provide office space at the Travis County Jail for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers. The demonstrations may be held at the Travis County Jail or at the Austin Community College's East View College, where Travis County Sheriff Greg Hamilton will be the featured speaker during a February 16 seminar entitled "Neighborhood Dialogue on Police Relations." Such protests would represent an expansion of the organization's usual interests, which to date have primarily been focused on anti-war issues. Other organizations, such as the Texas Jail Project, may also stage protests in conjunction with CodePink. Based on the past behavior of such groups, law enforcement should be prepared for disruptive behavior, which could potentially escalate into violence.



According to their website, CodePink is a "women-initiated grassroots peace and social justice movement working to end the war in Iraq, stop new wars, and redirect our resources into healthcare, education and other life-affirming activities." CodePink was formed in 2002 in opposition to a pre-emptive strike against Iraq, and since then has been staging anti-war protests and participating in anti-war rallies around the country. They are known to target key Bush administration officials and supporters of the Iraq war, along with anyone else they believe is either aiding the war effort or not doing enough to end the war. At times, they have used bold, disruptive methods that have culminated in arrests.



The Austin area chapter of CodePink reportedly has about 15 members and has conducted several recent protests in Austin and San Antonio. Although the chapter has not faced the same legal consequences as other chapters around the country, their protests tend to be just as bold and disruptive. In fact, the Austin chapter is considered by the national CodePink organization to be one of the most innovative chapters in the country. They have conducted protests and anti-recruitment rallies against the military on school campuses, including at least two protests on the University of Texas campus in Austin, and have recently begun wearing pink police officer uniforms at rallies and protests or while handing out "citations" to patrons along Austin's 6th Street nightlife district. Their most notable protest was conducted at Austin's Renaissance Hotel, where Karl Rove—the former advisor to President Bush—was to address members of the Republicans of Texas. CodePink flew a banner with helium balloons that depicted a caricature of Rove, and dumped hundreds of "Rove Bucks" on attendees from the 6th floor balcony. Other notable incidents in recent months include the October and November 2007 protests at Senator John Cornyn and Senator Kay Bailey Hutchinson's Austin



offices; the December 2007 protests at an upscale outdoor retail center in North Austin; and various “caroling” events around Austin area malls, shopping centers, and the Capitol Building.

The Texas Jail Project is an advocacy group for improving jail standards and practices as well as fighting for prisoners’ rights. According to the Texas Jail Project’s website, “TJP formed to improve conditions for incarcerated women by publicizing the widespread abuse and neglect in Texas county jail facilities.” The founder of the Texas Jail Project appears to be a member of CodePink and elicited the help of CodePink Austin for support against the new Travis County jail immigration policy.

Recent information indicates that Austin CodePink chapter members have been discussing their plans to stage some sort of protest against the Travis County Sherriff’s Office or against Sheriff Greg Hamilton for what they believe to be a violation of immigrant rights and for the fact that the sheriff’s office is giving ICE personnel 24-hour access to its jail. CodePink claims that illegal immigrants are being turned over to ICE for deportation without allowing them access to attorneys or without detailed reviews of their immigration status. Indications are that CodePink and the Texas Jail Project may protest the sheriff or the sheriff’s office concerning these issues and ask the sheriff to step down as a candidate in the primaries.

Analyst’s Comments

CodePink, by all admissions, is an anti-war organization; however, no indications regarding their official position on the immigration issue has been located. It is a reasonable conclusion that most of its members are liberal in their ideological views and that the Austin organization may be demonstrating in order to promote those views. However, discussions among Austin’s CodePink members and the Texas Jail Project regarding the event have centered on the immigration issue at Travis County Jail, and no mention has been found regarding any intention to use the event as a platform for protesting the war.

Law enforcement in other jurisdictions should be cognizant to the fact that other jails around the state also give ICE officials access to their jails on a 24-hour basis to help accelerate the deportation of illegal immigrants. Any of these facilities could become targets of protests and demonstrations by these same organizations or similar groups.

Any suspicious incidents or intelligence concerning these activities should be reported to the DPS Texas Intelligence Center at 1-866-786-5972; or via the Internet at www.texasalert.tx.gov.

Sources

<http://www.codepink4peace.org>

<http://www.texasjailproject.org>

<http://codepinkalert.org>

<http://codepinkaustin.com>

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/codepinkaustin>

“Women of Code Pink push for change.”

<http://www.statesman.com/news/content/news/stories/local/12/10/1210codepink.html>

“Code Pink Austin at Karl Rove Event.”

http://www.democraticunderground.com/discuss/duboard.php?az=view_all&address=389x2563562

“Man arrested for bomb at Texas abortion clinic.”

<http://www.reuters.com/article/domesticNews/idUSN2719258620070428>