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DHS officials privately express shock at department's immediate response to Minneapolis shooting

27 MIN AGO

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A bullet hole is seen in the windshield of a vehicle involved in a shooting by an ICE agent during ...



Multiple Department of Homeland Security officials privately expressed shock Wednesday over the department's immediate response to the fatal shooting of a woman by an ICE agent in Minneapolis, seeing it as a break from precedent that generally points to an investigation before reaching a firm conclusion.

Multiple current and former Homeland Security officials initially privately questioned the officer's conduct, though cautioned that the preceding events remained unclear and stressed that an investigation was necessary.

Only a few hours after the shooting, DHS released a statement calling the incident an "act of domestic terrorism," and stated that the ICE officer relied on his training and "fired defensive shots" at the vehicle, which they argued was trying to "run over" agents. (Videos of the incident show the woman appearing to attempt to drive away, though one video also seems to show the car making contact with an officer before he fired his gun.)

Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem reiterated the statement at a press conference on the US southern border and again in Minneapolis later in the day. The identity of the officer is unknown, though Noem described him as "experienced."

Tom Homan, the Trump administration's border czar, initially gave a more measured response, telling CBS News he wouldn't jump to a conclusion after watching one video or comment on an ongoing investigation. Later on Wednesday, Homan released a statement saying "the brave men and women of ICE are heroes. Like all Americans, our officers have a right to self defense. Full stop."

Around 2,000 federal agents deployed to Minnesota in recent days for the Trump administration's largest immigration operation to date, stemming from the welfare-fraud scandal that has ensnared the Somali community. Officers parachuted in from around the country, including from Arizona, Texas, Florida, California, and Georgia.

Upon arriving, officers also received extensive briefings about potential agitators, according to a federal law enforcement officer, adding that officers were told to call local police for backup if protestors got violent but otherwise not to engage if they were just yelling.

Generally, ICE policy says deadly use of force is only warranted if the subject poses an imminent threat of serious injury and or death. Flight of a vehicle doesn't typically constitute deadly force. ICE officers are trained to approach a vehicle by forming what's known as a "tactical L" to avoid being in front of the vehicle and prevent injury.



An onlooker holds a sign that reads "Shame" as members of law enforcement work the scene following a suspected shooting by an ICE agent during federal law enforcement operations on January 7 in Minneapolis. (Stephen MATUREN/Getty Images)

"I don't recognize my former agency. This is truly heartbreakng," a veteran ICE agent told CNN.

There also appeared to be lag between when the incident occurred and when agents approached to render aid.

“Some agents get more extensive medical training, but for the average ERO agent it’s very limited. These shootings are also rare. This is not something they have experience with,” said former acting ICE director John Sandweg.

Federal agents lifted the woman out of the car and moved her elsewhere. Local police rendered aid when they arrived.

Officials also noted that it’s standard procedure for officers to go to the hospital after an incident like a shooting and then be placed on a brief administrative leave. CNN has asked the Department of Homeland Security if the officer, who was hospitalized and discharged, is on administrative leave.



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