

If the state can kill an observer and then lie about it...

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After a week when Trump shocked the world, events in Minneapolis brought the focus right back to the USA.

The most disturbing part of the killing of Alex Pretti in that city yesterday is not what happened. We now know that ICE officers act like those who served the Gestapo, working as the shock troops of a fascist regime, enforcing that regime's wishes through violence. That is a reality we have been coming to terms with since the death of Renee Good. What still shocks is what happened afterwards.

A 37-year-old intensive care nurse stood on a street holding a phone. He was recording federal agents as they carried out an immigration enforcement operation. Many people are doing the same thing. What they know is that evidence of the truth still matters. They are determined to collect it. As a result multiple witnesses filmed what followed. The footage shows Alex Pretti retreating, continuing to record, stepping in to protect another observer, being pepper-sprayed, tackled, beaten, and then shot at close range. It does not show him threatening anyone. It does not show him brandishing a weapon.

And yet senior figures in the US administration said that he did.

This matters now because we are living through a period in which power is testing how far it can go, not just in what it does, but in what it says. When violence is followed by obvious falsehoods, and those falsehoods are repeated without shame, the issue is no longer one incident. The issue becomes that of the health of the US political system itself.

The Minneapolis killing was captured from multiple angles by ordinary people. Their films show officers escalating force. In any system committed to truth, that evidence would frame the response. Instead, the Trump regime ignored what actually happened. The evidence was ignored. It was treated as irrelevant. A fiction was created to justify the actions of ICE officers who killed an innocent man.

That tells us a great deal about how those in authority in the US now see themselves.

The Department of Homeland Security released an image of a gun. Senior officials described Pretti as an armed suspect intent on a massacre. These claims were made even as the footage of what happened was circulating widely, meaning the truth was known. This was not a case of uncertainty or confusion. It was instead the assertion of a narrative designed to justify lethal force and close down questioning, whatever the truth might be. When the state lies in this way in the face of evidence, it is asserting that power, not truth, is sovereign.

And in all this, the US government has forgotten that a man, an intensive care nurse, who clearly cared about his fellow US citizens (because he was one) lost his life. Pretti's parents described their son as a good man. But he died, and the authorities are not treating this as a mistake or a matter for remorse. They are treating Alex Pretti as an object, not as a person whose life will be mourned by those who knew him and loved him. The coldness of that reaction is chilling and staggering. It is as if all humanity has departed the Trump regime. People are just objects to them now.

I will not forget that this is about a man who died, wholly unexpectedly and utterly inappropriately, but because of the circumstances of his death, the bigger issues do need discussing, because the attempted normalisation of state violence, which is the very obvious Trump regime narrative here, matters. If officials can redefine a man holding a phone as a gunman, then the boundary of acceptable force shifts. If public scrutiny becomes suspect, and those who want to partake in it retreat from doing so in fear because recording will be seen as provocation, then justice will disappear, and accountability will then become optional, at best. That is the message this regime wants to send.

And this is not about a single incident. It is about a pattern in which institutions protect themselves first and tell the truth only if it is convenient. Once that pattern is established, the rule of law weakens rapidly. Laws are only as strong as the willingness of those in power to be bound by them. What we now know is that the Trump regime thinks the law is decidedly optional. They could not have made this more obvious in the last week, but most especially yesterday.

What follows from this is decidedly uncomfortable. Democracies do not collapse only through coups or insurrections, although Trump has already tried that once. They can also erode and fade when lies are repeated without consequence, when evidence is ignored, and when violence is justified after the fact by those who control the microphone. If the state can kill an observer and then lie about it, the question is not just who is safe, but who is believed. At this moment, that most definitely matters. Truth has to win. If it does not, hope leaves with it.