

# truthout

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## Report: ICE Is Expanding Surveillance of Its Critics on Social Media

It cites “an increase in threats” as the reason for seeking a contractor to monitor the public’s social media activity.

By Brett Wilkins, COMMON DREAMS  
February 12, 2025



New York City Fugitive Operations Team, joined by ICE Acting Director Caleb Vitello, conduct targeted raids on January 28, 2025, in New York City.

U.S. IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT VIA GETTY IMAGES

**U**S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement is seeking to hire a contractor as part of an effort to expand the monitoring of negative social media posts about the agency, its personnel, and operations, according to a report published Monday.

According to *The Intercept*’s Sam Biddle, ICE is citing “an increase in threats” to agents and leadership as the reason for seeking a contractor to keep tabs on the public’s social media activity.

The agency said the contractor “shall provide all necessary personnel, supervision, management, equipment, materials, and services, except for those provided by the government, in support of ICE’s desire to protect ICE senior leaders, personnel, and facilities via internet-based threat mitigation and monitoring services.”

“These efforts include conducting vulnerability assessments and proactive threat monitoring,” ICE added, explaining that the contractor will be required to provide daily and monthly status reports and immediately alert supervisors of “imminent threats.”

Careful what you post: ICE is seeking private contractors to conduct social media surveillance including detection of merely "negative" sentiment about the agency's leadership, agents, and general operations [theintercept.com/2025/02/11/i...](https://theintercept.com/2025/02/11/i...)

— Sam Biddle (@sambiddle.com) 2025-02-11T17:27:47.339Z

ICE will require the monitor to identify and report “previous social media activity which would indicate any additional threats to ICE,” as well as any information indicating that individuals or groups “making threats have a proclivity for violence” and anything “indicating a potential for carrying out a threat.”

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According to Biddle:

It’s unclear how exactly any contractor might sniff out someone’s “proclivity for violence.” The ICE document states only that the contractor will use “social and behavioral sciences” and “psychological profiles” to accomplish its automated threat detection.

Once flagged, the system will further scour a target’s internet history and attempt to reveal their real-world position and offline identity. In addition to compiling personal information—such as the Social Security numbers and addresses of those whose posts are flagged—the contractor will also provide ICE with a “photograph, partial legal name, partial date of birth, possible city, possible work affiliations, possible school or university affiliation, and any identified possible family members or associates.”

The document also requests “facial recognition capabilities that could take a photograph of a

subject and search the internet to find all relevant information associated with the subject.” The contract contains specific directions for targets found in other countries, implying the program would scan the domestic speech of American citizens.

“Careful what you post,” Biddle warned in a social media post promoting his article.

ICE is already monitoring social media posts via contractor Giant Oak, which was hired during the first Trump administration and former Democratic President Joe Biden’s term. However, “the goal of this [new] contract, ostensibly, is focused more narrowly on threats to ICE leadership, agents, facilities, and operations,” according to Biddle.

Cinthyia Rodriguez, an organizer with the immigrant rights group Mijente, told Biddle that “the current administration’s attempt to use this technology falls within the agency’s larger history of mass surveillance, which includes gathering information from personal social media accounts and retaliating against immigrant activists.”

“ICE’s attempt to have eyes and ears in as many places as we exist both online and offline should ring an alarm for all of us,” Rodriguez added.

The search for expanded ICE social media surveillance comes as President Donald Trump’s administration is carrying out what the Republican leader has promised will be the biggest mass deportation campaign in U.S. history. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security has been deporting migrants on military flights, with some deportees imprisoned at Guantánamo Bay, the notorious offshore U.S. military prison in Cuba.

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As Donald Trump is inaugurated a second time, independent media organizations are faced with urgent mandates: Tell the truth more loudly than ever before. Do that work even as our standard modes of distribution (such as social media platforms) are being manipulated and curtailed by forces of fascist repression and ruthless capitalism. Do that work even as journalism and journalists face targeted attacks, including from the government itself. And do that work in community, never forgetting that we’re not shouting into a faceless void – we’re reaching out to real people amid a life-threatening political climate.

**Our task is formidable, and it requires us to ground ourselves in our principles, remind ourselves of our utility, dig in and commit.**

As a dizzying number of corporate news organizations – either through need or greed – rush to implement new ways to further monetize their content, and others acquiesce to

Trump's wishes, now is a time for movement media-makers to double down on community-first models.

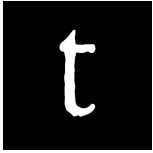
At *Truthout*, we are reaffirming our commitments on this front: We won't run ads or have a paywall because we believe that everyone should have access to information, and that access should exist without barriers and free of distractions from craven corporate interests. We recognize the implications for democracy when information-seekers click a link only to find the article trapped behind a paywall or buried on a page with dozens of invasive ads. The laws of capitalism dictate an unending increase in monetization, and much of the media simply follows those laws. ***Truthout* and many of our peers are dedicating ourselves to following other paths – a commitment which feels vital in a moment when corporations are evermore overtly embedded in government.**

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BRETT WILKINS

Brett Wilkins is a staff writer for *Common Dreams*.

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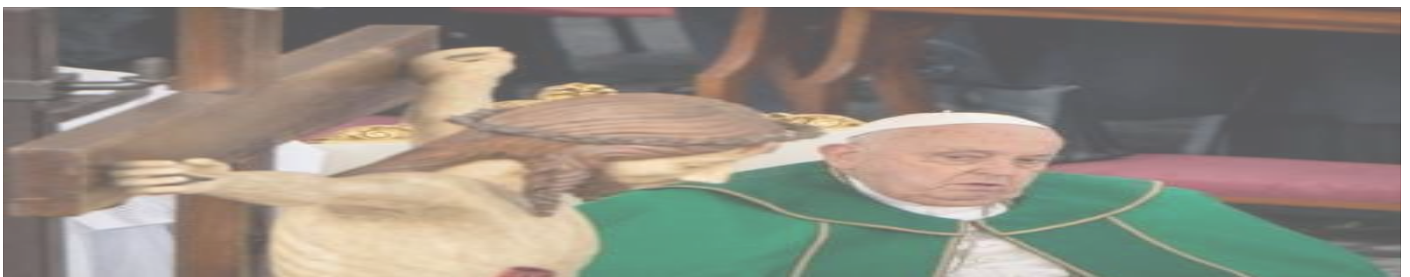


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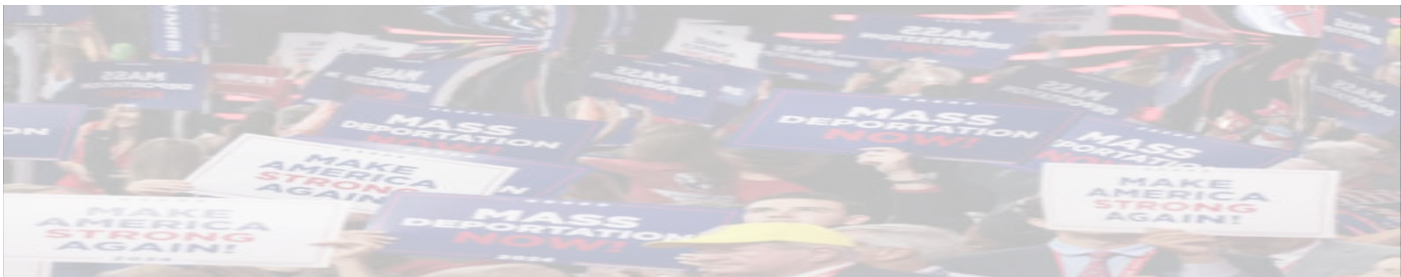


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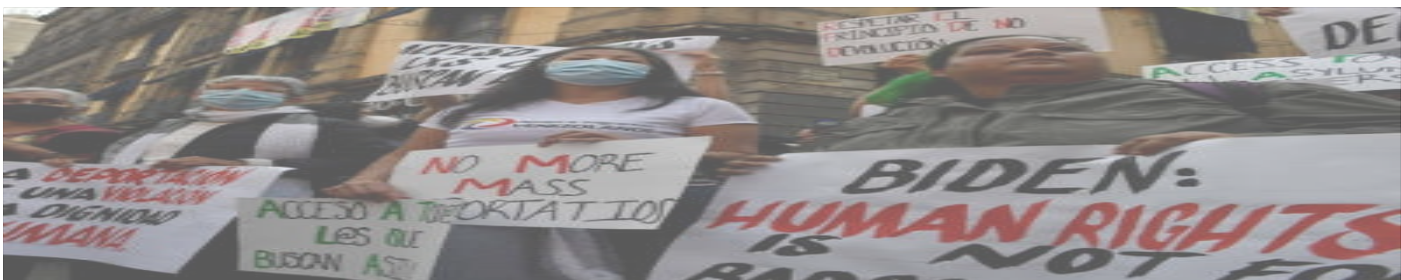


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