



## **KNOW YOUR RIGHTS GUIDE: FEDERAL LAW ENFORCEMENT DEPLOYMENTS<sup>1</sup>**

The Trump Administration has already initiated unprecedented mass deployments of federal cops and service members in Los Angeles and Washington D.C. and has threatened to take similar actions in other cities throughout the United States. While these takeovers are on questionable legal footing,<sup>2</sup> they pose real threats to the constitutional rights of people who reside in these cities. This FAQ sheet is intended to provide an overview of rights and risks of communities in cities that have been subject to a federal takeover, including what you should ask your state and local officials to do to minimize harm.

### **Why Are Federal Agents, Troops, and National Guardsmen Being Deployed to My City?**

The purported reason behind the administration's mass deployments of federal agents and service members has been to stop interference with ICE operations in Los Angeles<sup>3</sup> and to reduce crime in Washington D.C.<sup>4</sup> In Los Angeles, arrests made by federal agents and troops were limited to instances where an individual allegedly interfered with an ICE arrest or damaged federal property.<sup>5</sup> In D.C., given the city's unique quasi-federal jurisdiction, federal officers have been able to make arrests and bring charges for common street crimes.<sup>6</sup> The Trump administration has stated that future deployments will focus on reducing crime. However, federal agents and personnel will most likely lack jurisdiction to make arrests for anything other than federal crimes. Very few street crimes are federal crimes so it is unclear what deployed law enforcement agents will do in other cities. Though they are the exception, you should know that several states have empowered

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<sup>1</sup>This guide is not intended to be legal advice, please be sure to consult an attorney if you have questions.

<sup>2</sup>See eg. *Newsom v. Trump*, 2025 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 112430 (N.D. Cal. Jun. 12, 2025)

<sup>3</sup> *Department of Defense Security for the Protection of Department of Homeland Security Functions*, Jun. 7, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/06/departments-of-defense-security-for-the-protection-of-department-of-homeland-security-functions/>

<sup>4</sup> *Restoring Law and Order in the District of Columbia*, Aug. 11, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/08/restoring-law-and-order-in-the-district-of-columbia/>

<sup>5</sup> See eg., Sam Levin, *Dropped Cases Against LA Protesters Reveal False Claims from Federal Agents*, The Guardian, July 28, 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/jul/28/doj-la-protesters-false-claims>

<sup>6</sup> See eg. Devlin Barrett, *In Washington Crackdown, Making a Federal Case Out of a Low-Level Arrest*, NY Times, Aug. 24, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/08/24/us/politics/trump-dc-crime-takeover-federal-court.html>



federal law enforcement officers to make arrests for state law violations including Oregon,<sup>7</sup> Florida,<sup>8</sup> and Tennessee.<sup>9</sup>

## **What Are My Rights If I am Stopped by a Federal Agent or Member of the National Guard?**

You have the same Fourth Amendment protections regardless of whether you are stopped by a federal law enforcement officer (“LEO”)<sup>10</sup> or a local law enforcement officer. However, there are unique risks associated with federal LEO interactions, particularly for immigrants, Black and Brown people, and unhoused communities. You should be aware that negative interactions with federal LEOs can result in federal charges and carry more severe penalties than encounters with state or local law enforcement.

**What if Federal LEOs Stop Me on the Street?** Ask if you are free to go. If the answer is yes, consider just walking away. If the LEO says you are not under arrest, but are not free to go, then you are being detained. Federal LEOs can pat down the outside of your clothing if they have reason to suspect you might be armed and dangerous.<sup>11</sup> You do not have to consent to a search beyond a pat down or open your bags but be aware that the officer may search you anyways. It is important that you don’t try to physically prevent a federal LEO from conducting a search as it could result in federal charges for assault.<sup>12</sup>

**Can Federal LEOs Force Me to Unlock My Phone If I Am Stopped?** It depends on where you are stopped. For example, in Illinois, forcing a person to provide a fingerprint, facial recognition, or passcode violate your Fifth Amendment rights.<sup>13</sup> Other jurisdictions have found that an officer can require you to open your phone. You should be aware that knowingly providing an incorrect passcode could result in sentencing enhancements if you are ultimately charged with and convicted of a federal crime.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> ORS 133.220

<sup>8</sup> FL Stat § 901.1505

<sup>9</sup> TN Code § 38-3-113

<sup>10</sup> This info sheet uses the term “federal law enforcement officer” to include officers of federal agencies like ICE as well as National Guard personnel.

<sup>11</sup> *Terry v. Ohio*, 392 U.S. 1 (1968)

<sup>12</sup> 18 U.S.C. §111(a)(1)(defines assault on a federal agent as forcibly interfering with an employee of a federal agency while engaged in the performance of their official duties).

<sup>13</sup> See *In re Application for a Search Warrant*, 236 F. Supp. 3d 1066, 1073 (N.D. Ill. 2017); see also *In re Single-Family Home & Attached Garage*, No. 17-M-85, 2017 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 170184, at \*25 (N.D. Ill. Feb. 21, 2017).

<sup>14</sup> *United States v. Beattie*, 919 F.3d 1110, 1116 (8th Cir. 2019).



As a reminder, this information is intended for individuals located in cities subject to mass federal agent deployments. You should consult resources explaining your rights and best practices for digital privacy if you are at a border or point of entry.<sup>15</sup>

**Do I Have to Answer Federal LEO Questions If I'm stopped?** No, you do not have to answer any questions if you are stopped by a federal LEO. You are not required to provide any information about yourself, including information about your immigration status. If you do choose to speak, *it is very important that you do not provide false information—including a false name—to a federal LEO.* You could be charged with a separate crime for lying to a federal LEO and which carries harsh penalties.<sup>16</sup> While there is no federal law requirement to identify yourself, some states require you to provide your name to law enforcement officers if stopped.<sup>17</sup> If a local or state law enforcement officer is involved in your stop, you could face state law charges for failing to identify yourself.

**Do I have to answer federal LEO questions if I'm arrested?**

No, you do not have to answer any questions if you are arrested by a federal LEO. You should affirmatively and unambiguously state that you wish to assert your right to remain silent. Ask for a lawyer right away. Do not say anything else. Repeat to every cop who tries to talk to or question you that you wish to remain silent and that you wish to speak to a lawyer. If you do choose to speak, it is very important that you do not provide false information to a federal LEO. You could be charged with a separate crime for lying to a federal LEO and these crimes carry harsh penalties.<sup>18</sup>

**What Should I Do If Federal LEOs Set Up a Roadblock in My Community?**

It is illegal to set up a roadblock for general crime detection and deterrence purposes.<sup>19</sup> However, the federal government has been using them in D.C. for these prohibited

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<sup>15</sup> *Border Searches*, Electronic Frontier Foundation, <https://www.eff.org/issues/border-searches>; *FAQs- Searches of Electronic Devices at the Border*, [https://informationsecurity.princeton.edu/sites/g/files/toruqf1121/files/searches\\_of\\_electronic\\_devices\\_at\\_the\\_border\\_-\\_faqs\\_-\\_march\\_2017\\_0.pdf](https://informationsecurity.princeton.edu/sites/g/files/toruqf1121/files/searches_of_electronic_devices_at_the_border_-_faqs_-_march_2017_0.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> See 18 U.S.C. §1001

<sup>17</sup> *Stop and Identify Statutes in the United States*, Immigration Legal Resource Center, [https://www.ilrc.org/sites/default/files/resources/stop\\_identify\\_statutes\\_in\\_us-lg-20180201v3.pdf](https://www.ilrc.org/sites/default/files/resources/stop_identify_statutes_in_us-lg-20180201v3.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> *Supra*. n4

<sup>19</sup> *City of Indianapolis v. Edmonds*, 531 U.S. 32 (2000)



purposes. If there are roadblocks erected, you should refrain from backing up or turning around to evade a roadblock as it may constitute a traffic violation and lead to you being stopped anyways. When stopped at a roadblock, keep your hands where the LEOs can see them. You should provide license, insurance, and registration upon request, but you do not have to consent to a search. You should document when and where roadblocks are being erected and who is typically being detained at them. This information could assist a lawyer in bringing challenges to federal roadblock operations.

**What If I Am Treated Badly by a Federal LEO?** Write down their name and any other identifying information that you can find, including a description of their physical appearance. Try to find witnesses and get their names and phone numbers. If you are injured, seek medical attention and take pictures of the injuries as soon as you can. Use NPAP's public directory to look for a lawyer in your state: <https://engage.nlg-npap.org/civicrm/profile?gid=10&reset=1>. The process of suing federal officers and agents is incredibly complex. Be sure to choose an attorney with prior experience and training on how to handle these complicated cases.

### **What Can My Local Elected Officials Do to Keep Me Safe?**

[Local Progress](#) has provided incredible resources outlining what state and local law elected officials can do to limit the reach of federal LEOs that have been deployed over the city's objections.<sup>20</sup> Most importantly, cities and states should end consensual cooperation and information sharing agreements with the federal law enforcement agencies including Joint Terrorism Task Forces and fusion centers. Local and state elected officials should also consider ending their use of surveillance technologies since federal law enforcement agencies can often access them and use them to target vulnerable communities.

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<sup>20</sup>Accessible at: <https://localprogress.org/resources/election-2024/>