

Date: August 8, 2022

Subject: Data Leak Points to Significant Possible Links Between Oath Keepers and U.S. Law Enforcement

### ADL ASSESSMENT

On September 27, 2021, the non-profit journalist collective Distributed Denial of Secrets (DDoSecrets) uploaded a cache of data allegedly linked to the Oath Keepers, a far-right anti-government militia. The data includes: chat records from the group's private chatroom hosted on Rocketchat from June 22 to June 26, 2020 and February 5 to September 19, 2021; emails from January 13 to September 19, 2021; and membership information for more than 38,000 individuals including addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses. While reviewing this information, the ADL identified eight individuals who according to open-source resources work for the Chicago Police Department. Their information is included below.

While the full veracity of the database has not been confirmed, open-source reporting has confirmed some of the individuals' association with the Oath Keepers. Similarly, at least one Oath Keeper posted in the private chat that they were contacted by a reporter because their information was found in the database.

It is important to note that inclusion on this list means that at some point they signed up for membership. The fact that a member of law enforcement joined the Oath Keepers is extremely concerning and warrants further investigation.

### The Oath Keepers

The Oath Keepers are a far-right anti-government militia whose members believe the federal government has been coopted by a shadowy conspiracy – often referred to as the New World Order – that is trying to strip Americans of their rights so that the people can ultimately be enslaved.

The group differentiates themselves from other militias by explicitly targeting current and former members of the military and law enforcement with their recruitment and messaging. Oath Keepers believe that if the federal government issues an unconstitutional order – often illustrated with extreme cases such as mass gun confiscation or illegally mass detaining Americans in concentration camps – it is up to the military and law enforcement to enforce these edicts, and they want to reach service members first so that they are prepared to refuse and resist these orders. Though Oath Keepers frame their objections in the language of constitutionality, these interpretations are typically not grounded in any legal basis and are warped by conspiratorial thinking; as a result, their objections are typically reflections of laws or regulations they disagree with.

The Oath Keepers have a history of engaging in criminal activity. Most recently and notably, on January 13, 2022, federal authorities arrested Oath Keepers founder Stewart Rhodes on charges of seditious conspiracy for his role in the January 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol. In addition

CL # 2023-4935  
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Exhibit 1

to Rhodes, ten other Oath Keepers – nine of whom were already facing conspiracy charges relating to the attack – were charged with seditious conspiracy, and these individuals are the first to face seditious conspiracy charges for conduct arising from the January 6 insurrection. The indictment alleges that Rhodes conspired with co-defendants and others to oppose, by force, the execution of the laws enabling the transfer of presidential power. Part of their plot involved creating “quick reaction forces” (QRF) that were intended to deliver weapons to D.C. in the event the Oath Keepers deemed them necessary. Regarding these teams, on January 3, 2021, one of the conspirators sent a message to a co-conspirator that read: “We are not bringing firearms. QRF will be our Law Enforcement members of Oathkeepers” [sic]. All told, at least 25 Oath Keepers are facing various charges in connection with their actions on January 6, 2021.

The Oath Keepers first garnered national attention in 2014 and 2015 for their armed participation in disputes between ranchers or miners and federal agencies, most famously in Nevada where they joined the 2014 Bundy Ranch standoff against the Bureau of Land Management. Oath Keepers also participated while armed in a 2015 standoff in Lincoln, Montana between the White Hope Mine and the U.S. Forest Service and in the 2015 standoff in Josephine County, Oregon, between the Sugar Pine Mine and the Bureau of Land Management.

Members of the Oath Keepers have been arrested in connection with a wide range of criminal activities, including various firearms violations, conspiracy to impede federal workers, possession of explosives, and threatening public officials.

### **Challenges Posed by Members of Law Enforcement in the Oath Keepers**

When a member of law enforcement joins the Oath Keepers, it creates several challenges and conflicts of interest that can be detrimental to the functioning of law enforcement agencies. First and foremost, by associating with extremist movements, members of law enforcement are behaving in a way that directly contradicts their oaths to serve and protect communities and they are undermining community safety. These associations can also erode trust between law enforcement and the public, thereby impeding effective policing, and it can also lead to a breakdown in trust between officers and their coworkers, thereby compromising safety for all.

Furthermore, their presence represents a potential security threat. Members of law enforcement are frequently privy to sensitive or classified information, and it is possible that members who are also part of the Oath Keepers could use this information to advance their agenda or even to disrupt an investigation. It is also possible that members of the Oath Keepers could steal police equipment, either to arm themselves or to sell.

In addition, when an individual joins the Oath Keepers they are encouraged to swear an oath that lists orders they will not obey, which differs significantly from the oath individuals typically swear when joining law enforcement. This could create a conflict when an Oath Keeper refuses to enforce a law as ordered by a superior and deemed constitutional by the courts.

Finally, members of law enforcement receive specialized training in a variety of areas to enable them to be effective in combat and these same skills could be used to advance any kinetic

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activity engaged in by the Oath Keepers, for example during stand offs against the federal government over mining or cattle rights, or during an insurrection to stop the certification of an election and impede the peaceful transfer of power.

**Database Information**

The following is a spreadsheet listing the individuals found within the recent Oath Keepers hack who according to open-source research are currently members of law enforcement.

There are two caveats regarding this information. The first is that it is not clear the exact reason these individuals signed up. Second, these individuals' employment with the Chicago Police Department was determined by using public databases, media reports, and social media. While these sources do typically provide accurate information, it is possible that there are multiple people in an area with the same name. As such, the information in this chart should be verified using personnel records to ensure that the individual is the same.

The spreadsheet below includes individuals' names, addresses, towns, states, zip codes, email addresses and phone numbers.

Alberto Retamozo	[REDACTED]	Chicago	IL	60630	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Matthew J Bracken	[REDACTED]	Chicago	IL	60634	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Phillip Singto	[REDACTED]	Chicago	IL	60646	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Anthony E. Keany	[REDACTED]	Chicago	IL	60631	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Michael Nowacki	[REDACTED]	Chicago	IL	60630	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Dennis Kevin Mack	[REDACTED]	Chicago	IL	60638	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Alexander Kim	[REDACTED]	Chicago	IL	60625	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Bob Davis	[REDACTED]	Glen Carbon	IL	61023	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]



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EXTREMISM IN THE RANKS

# Chicago police with extremist ties have troubling records

An investigation by WBEZ, Chicago Sun-Times and the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project found allegations of excessive force, improper searches and racist comments on the job

By Dan Mihaleccios, Tom Schuba and Kevin G. Hall  
Edited by Angela Rozas O'Toole, Tom Arnold and Dan Haas  
Published October 22, 2023

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### PART TWO: Still on the force

Chicago police have not aggressively investigated cops linked to extremist groups, even as newly elected Mayor Brandon Johnson vowed to fire them.

### PART THREE: Lives changed

Jyran Mitchell was a star football player when he was injured while being detained by a state trooper tied to extremism. Officers across Illinois have joined the Oath Keepers

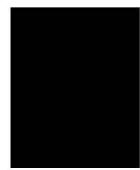
Key Findings



Exhibit 2

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- [Faint, illegible text]
- [Faint, illegible text]

*Editor's note: The following contains graphic and offensive language.*



**NOTIFICATION OF CHARGES/ALLEGATIONS**  
CHICAGO POLICE DEPARTMENT

NAME OF ACCUSED	GRADE	STATION	EMPLOYEE NO.	UNIT OF ASSIGNMENT
CHRISTOPHER HOFFMAN	P-3	1528	[REDACTED]	12F

DATE: 11/24/14 TIME: 1:00 PM

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED AND IS THE PROPERTY OF THE CHICAGO POLICE DEPARTMENT. IT IS TO BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL AND NOT TO BE DISCLOSED TO THE PUBLIC. ANY INFORMATION CONTAINED HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED AND IS THE PROPERTY OF THE CHICAGO POLICE DEPARTMENT. IT IS TO BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL AND NOT TO BE DISCLOSED TO THE PUBLIC.

THE CHICAGO POLICE DEPARTMENT POLICY PROVIDES THAT ALL EMPLOYEES HAVE THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT. THE CHICAGO POLICE DEPARTMENT POLICY PROVIDES THAT ALL EMPLOYEES HAVE THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT.

IF YOU ARE ACCUSED OF THE FOLLOWING ALLEGATIONS, YOU WILL BE REQUIRED TO SIGN THIS FORM.

**CUMPLAINANT(S)**

Signature of Cumplainant: \_\_\_\_\_

A Chicago police officer allegedly made racial jokes to a police firing range for years, just after a work environment that a Black colleague believed to a Ku Klux Klan gathering.

I hereby acknowledge receipt of a copy of the charges or allegations as stated above.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**WITNESSES**

[REDACTED] *ery A 85*

[REDACTED]

**DISTRIBUTION:**  
LOG NUMBER INVESTIGATION  
Original to Investigator's file  
Copy to accused person(s)

LOG NUMBER	125804
ASSIGNMENT NO.	26

CPD-44.115 (Rev. 4/16)

Another cop was accused of using racial slurs after pulling over a driver who mistakenly turned onto a one-way street after leaving a West Side church.



Act. You say you just responded to a call by  
returning a call by telling an activist from  
Chicago that he had "no desire to help in any way  
more people."

They're among at least 27 current and former  
Chicago police officials whose names appeared in  
leaked rosters for the Oath Keepers, an anti-  
government group that played a central role in the





An investigation by WBEZ, the Chicago Sun-Times and the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project found some have troubling backgrounds that include allegations of excessive force, improper searches and racist comments on the job.

At least nine of them remain on the police force, even after newly elected Mayor Brandon Johnson vowed to rid the department of extremists.

The Chicago Police Department has resisted taking action against officers for their ties with the Oath Keepers — once again placing a spotlight on a troubled disciplinary system as police leaders struggle to make sweeping, court-ordered changes to policies and practices.

Investigators closed a probe into officers' ties to the Oath Keepers last year without finding any wrongdoing or investigating most of the police officials who appeared in the leak. The inaction drew a sharp rebuke from the city's top watchdog, who says just joining an extremist group violates the police department's rules of conduct.



Many of the cops on the Oath Keepers' rolls worked in the Special Operations Section, which was disbanded amid revelations that some members had committed brazen robberies and the purported ringleader plotted to murder a colleague. Some of the officers tied to the Oath Keepers have been departmental trainers, teaching young cops how to do the job.

The leaked membership records show that several cops promised to promote the Oath Keepers at work or reported that colleagues recruited them into the group.

A detective in the financial crimes section told the organization that his "brothers in Blue have passed the word amongst ourselves," while a former sergeant vowed to "spread the word of Oath Keepers to Officers at roll calls."

Asked recently about their involvement in the Oath Keepers, some of the officers said they had limited involvement with the group and decried its

## A list, a campaign pledge – and little action

The Oath Keepers' membership data was leaked months after the group stoked the attack on the U.S. Capitol in a failed attempt to halt the transition of presidential power. Founder Stewart Rhodes and other Oath Keepers have since been convicted of sedition in what's thought to be the broadest federal investigation in the nation's history.

### Who are the Oath Keepers?

#### The beginning

Stewart Rhodes started the Oath Keepers group in 2009 after America's first Black president, Barack Obama, was elected.

#### Recruiting law enforcement

Rhodes is a Yale-educated lawyer and former Army paratrooper who aggressively recruited servicemen, cops and first responders to join his crusade against what he perceived as elites trampling Americans' rights.

#### Cou

An Oath Keeper in 2019, Rhodes was charged with conspiring to detain Obama and other officials during the 2021 insurrection.

National Public Radio reported in November 2021 that a group of active Chicago cops appeared on the membership roster.

In response, the police department opened its investigation into three officers and issued a statement insisting there was "zero tolerance for hate or extremism within CPD."

Then, in August 2022, the Anti-Defamation League sent a letter to a top police official warning that it had identified eight Chicago cops in the

leaked data on proscribing their name.

"It is important to note that inclusion on this list means that at some point they signed up for membership," the ADL wrote to then-First Deputy Supt. Eric Carter on Aug. 8, 2022. "The fact that a member of law enforcement joined the Oath Keepers is extremely concerning and warrants investigation." Carter could not be reached for comment.

But the department didn't expand the scope of its investigation after the ADL letter and the probe was closed just three months later, records show. No one was disciplined, including a Black cop who hadn't joined the group, and police officials concluded that "memberships into organizations in itself is not a rule violation."

However, after WBEZ and the Sun-Times obtained a copy of the ADL's letter through an open-records request, a police spokesperson said last week the department was opening a new investigation.

The department's past handling of extremists sparked angry City Council hearings and became an issue on the mayoral campaign trail, where Johnson promised to fire all cops "with direct ties to extremist organizations," including the Oath Keepers.

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Chicago cops' racist social media posts detailed in new COPA report



CPD officer



City Inspector David Witzburg said Johnson can and should keep that pledge, pointing to broad rules that prohibit cops from discrediting the department and undermining its goals.

"This issue goes to the soul of the police department," Witzburg said in an interview. "We will end up with the police department we deserve through our handling of these cases."

"The fundamental question before us is whether we can abide by having members of the Chicago Police Department associate with extremist groups."

At City Hall last week, Johnson's deputy mayor for community safety said the new administration was working to fulfill the campaign promise to fire extremist cops.

"The mayor's position remains clear — this is something that we can't stand for," Garien Gatewood said. "We want folks who want to protect folks who live here, regardless of skin color, regardless of where they're from."

Meanwhile, a new civilian-led panel is working with police officials to broaden a policy that bars officers from joining "criminal organizations," specifically street gangs.

A draft policy submitted this year expands the scope to explicitly include groups that engage in extremist activities, including those that "seek to overthrow, destroy, or alter the form of government of the United States by unconstitutional means."

Under the draft, police officials would compile a list of groups that would be kept from the public.

A prominent civil rights organization warns that bigotry and coded racism are ingrained in the Oath Keepers' ideology, even though the group's rules

prohibit discrimination and some of the Chicago cops who joined come from diverse backgrounds.

"I feel like there is a direct correlation to being a member of the Oath Keepers and allegations of racist conduct," said Jeff Tischer, a Chicago-based senior researcher with the Southern Poverty Law Center.

The investigation by WBEZ, the Sun-Times and the OCCRP provides an unprecedented look at how cops connected to the Oath Keepers performed on the job in a city as diverse as Chicago.

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## 'They're supposed to serve and protect'



Click on document icons to see specific pages referenced through the story.

Deborah Payne still becomes tearful more than 15 years after exchanging emails with a police sergeant named Michael Nowacki.

Payne, a longtime community activist on the South Side, says Nowacki — and other cops like him — are corrosive to the ties between the police department and the public, comparing them to "a leak of poison throughout the community."

The incident that altered her previously positive view of the police came a few weeks before Christmas in 2007, when Payne was trying to help two poor families in Englewood. She sent an email to a group that included Nowacki — who had given Payne his business card at a neighborhood meeting where police try to build trust with the public.

The... of "Nowacki and others for donations of clothing, food and Bibles for the families.

Using his police email account, Nowacki replied: "You are a god."

Nowacki also told Payne she should not have sent him the request because, "I have no desire to help inner city poor people." He added, "Any further communication from you will be considered harassment."

Payne called another community activist and cried as she described messages from Nowacki, according to police records obtained by WBEZ and the Sun-Times. The other activist sent a letter to the commander for Payne's police district, saying the message from Nowacki was "rude, insensitive, and totally out of character of what the City of Chicago Police Department is supposed to represent to the citizens of this city."

The letter to the commander said Nowacki's response was "especially hurtful" because Payne was an active community member in efforts to improve Englewood.

The activist's letter added that the response from Nowacki raised questions about "the attitude and the state of mind of a so-called public servant — that carries a loaded weapon mind you." The letter writer — who, like Payne, is Black — said Nowacki "should not be in the inner city making a salary."

Nowacki was interviewed by a Chicago police investigator about Payne's complaint in January 2008. A veteran of the U.S. Army

Nowacki, and who served on juries, Nowacki said he was talking to the investigator "under duress."

Asked why he sent the email, Nowacki replied, "I have some issues, and I exercised some really bad judgment," according to a transcript of the interview.

Nowacki was suspended for three days, police records show. He completed the punishment by forfeiting a fraction of the nearly 150 hours of compensatory time he had banked at that point, the records show.

Payne, 72, learned only recently from reporters that Nowacki became an Oath Keeper.



Deborah Payne, a lifelong activist on Chicago's South Side, chokes up remembering how hurt she felt from Officer Michael Nowacki's email response. Victor Hilitski/For the Sun-Times



"Who's the good one?" Payne said. She would like to tell Nowacki "What you did, and what you're doing, is dirty and wrong."

She said she still works with police in her neighborhood and has not had other bad experiences with them, but thinks Nowacki should be fired.

"They're supposed to serve and protect, and their heart has that kind of venom in it," Payne said.

Nowacki was later reprimanded for making a series of Facebook posts during the COVID-19 pandemic that criticized the police command staff, mocked an online dashboard that tracks public sentiment toward the department and showed him wearing a cloth mask.

"See, I wear my dumb mask at work," he posted.

Nowacki did not respond to requests for comment.

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## 'You would think you're in the middle of a Klan rally'



Click on document icons to see specific pages referenced through the story.


After racking up complaints while serving with a notorious unit, Officer Christopher Hoffman settled into a new role training recruits on handling guns.

He eventually ran into more trouble after a Black officer accused him of making racially insensitive jokes over a four-year period that stretched until 2017, when they worked together at the police academy with at least three other cops linked to the Oath Keepers.

▶

“I’ve been in the military in Tennessee and Alabama. I’ve never heard a person use racial comments to that extent,” the Black officer told investigators in March 2017.

The officer said he was particularly offended when Hoffman told him Water Tower Place had “food for your kind” while they were detailed downtown after the Cubs’ World Series victory in 2016, according to investigatory records.



▶

But Hoffman had also made disparaging remarks about Jews, Asians and Puerto Ricans, according to the Black officer, who pointed to a larger cultural problem. He recalled another employee casually saying it “wouldn’t be a big problem” to call him a “n-----.”

“If you were Stevie Wonder and you would come into our break room,” the Black officer said, “sometimes you would think you’re in the middle of a Klan rally.”

▶

When confronted by investigators with the Independent Police Review Authority, Hoffman denied the allegations. IPRA closed the case without

finding any wrongdoing, but he was transferred

Hoffman previously worked alongside crooked cops in the special operations section, an elite unit that attracted some officers who effectively functioned as a robbery crew.

At least 11 cops were convicted in the scandal, including the alleged ringleader Jerome Finnigan, who was sentenced to **12 years in federal prison** for plotting to kill a fellow officer he sought to silence.

Hoffman is among nine officers — four current and five former — who were assigned to special operations and were also on Oath Keepers rolls. He was the subject of 33 investigations during his time in the unit, facing accusations of beating arrestees, conducting illegal searches and stealing cash, according to public records.

Most of his complaints were investigated by special operations sergeants, including one supervisor who resigned while facing dismissal for allegedly accepting bribes to cover up the theft of \$450,000, according to public records. None of the allegations against Hoffman were sustained, including those made in six cases that targeted him and his partners for allegedly using racial slurs.

A lawsuit filed in federal court in 2002 accused Hoffman, Finnigan and others embroiled in the special operations scandal of falsely arresting a human rights worker who allegedly watched one of them strike a fleeing Black teenager with a police vehicle near the Stateway Gardens public housing complex.

pg 19

The worker alleged in the lawsuit he was called a “f----- monkey” and a “f----- n-----” before he was hit with charges that were later dropped.

The city settled the suit for \$10,000 without admitting any wrongdoing.



At a critical police investigation point there was "insufficient evidence to either prove or disprove the allegations."

Hoffman declined to comment for this story.

## 'Scared to be around white people like that'

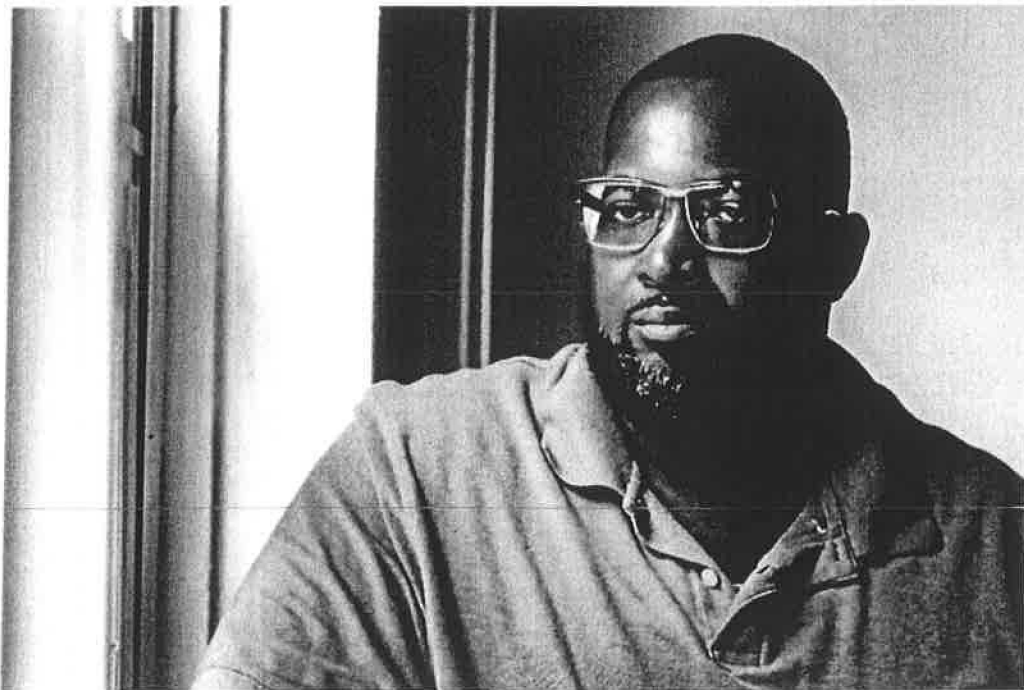


Click on document icons to see specific pages referenced through the story



Brandon Forbish, a special education teacher and football coach from the south suburbs, drove to Chicago one April night in 2014 to watch the national college basketball championship game with fellow members of Greater St. John Bible Church.





Special education teacher Brandon Forbish alleges Officer John Nicezyporuk called him racial slurs at a traffic stop. Ashlee Rezin/Sun-Times

After the game, Forbish inadvertently went the wrong direction on a one-way street in Austin.

pg 11

Police stopped Forbish, and one cop subjected him to a barrage of racial slurs, according to police records and a recent interview. Forbish, who is Black, alleges that a white officer named John Nicezyporuk called him multiple slurs, including a “f----- n-----.”

Forbish filed a complaint at a police station immediately after the incident, and was interviewed by a police department investigator.

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He told the police his encounter with Nicezyporuk left him “scared to be around white people like that ... especially white cops.

“And it shouldn’t be like that,” Forbish said at that interview. “I’m paranoid now.”

Nieczyporuk did not respond to multiple requests for an interview.

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Police records show Nieczyporuk denied Forbush's allegations, and investigators concluded that the case against the officer was not sustained, noting, "There was no audio or video evidence."

Forbush's traffic ticket was eventually thrown out.

Forbush said in a recent interview that he felt "discombobulated" when told that Nieczyporuk was not disciplined. After being told that records show Nieczyporuk was among the Chicago police officers listed as belonging to the Oath Keepers, Forbush had a message for the officer.

"Man, you should be ashamed of yourself," Forbush said. "You took an oath to serve and protect, but you're not doing your damn job."

Forbush's pastor, the Rev. Ira Acree, said he remembered what happened to Forbush clearly. Forbush called Acree right after the incident and the minister accompanied Forbush to file the complaint and to his interview with the police department investigator.





Rev. Ira Acree was with Forbush when he filed the complaint. Almost a decade later, he can still see the impact the encounter had on Forbush. Ashlee Rezin/Sun-Times

Acree said the department has proven unable to police itself, and he called for an outside investigation into the Oath Keepers and other extremists on the force. He's been among the ministers and community activists calling on Chicago police to more aggressively root out extremist cops.

"You cannot continue to allow unprofessional policing to take place, particularly in neighborhoods of color," he said. "It's very corrosive, and it's even more corrosive when there continues to be a pattern of this behavior." [REDACTED]

Records show Nicezyporuk faced another formal complaint from a Black man in 2010, who alleged the officer used racial slurs during a stop. As with Forbush's case, Nicezyporuk denied using slurs, and the complaint was deemed not sustained by investigators.

Nicezyporuk was reprimanded, though, in 2022 after refusing to comply with the COVID-19 vaccination mandate.

"I found it to be an unlawful order, so I could not comply," Nicezyporuk said to investigators, according to records. "This stems from just me coming onto this job 18 years ago where I took an oath, and it means something to me.

"I would not follow an order if I was ordered to violate somebody else's civil rights, you know, a civilian on the streets, and I take offense to my rights being violated by the very department that employs me."

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## 'Goofy witch hunt'

Hoffman was one of the few officers targeted in the police department's Oath Keepers probe, but he retired in January 2022 before he could be interviewed by investigators.

Nowacki is assigned to the Shakespeare District. Nicezyporuk works in the department's training and support group.

At least seven other active-duty cops appeared on the Oath Keepers roster:

- Officers Phillip Singto, Alberto Retamozo, and Bienvenido Acevedo are assigned to districts on the North and Northwest sides. Matthew Bracken works on the West Side.
- Officer Dennis Mack works in the public transportation section.
- Detective Anthony Keany investigates financial crimes.
- Detective Alexander Kim is assigned to the Area 3 detective division.

Bracken said in an interview for this story he has not identified with the Oath Keepers in over a decade and never attended meetings or paid membership fees, though the group's leaked records show he's listed as a dues-paying member in records as recently as 2015.



Blacken said he was attracted to the group's mission statement and the fact it was for "people who served," noting that friends in his military unit had joined and he wanted to help one of them bolster membership. Still, he called his commitment "a one-time deal."

While Blacken said he now steers clear of politics, he referred to a news story he said exonerated some of the Oath Keepers embroiled in the Jan. 6 investigation.

"You don't know what's truth and what's not," he said of the current climate. "You can't trust anyone anymore. There's too many people on their own agendas."

Acevedo said in an interview for this story that other department members pulled him into the Oath Keepers more than a decade ago, though he claimed he hadn't "joined for any radical reasons" and only perused the group's website, which has included incendiary content.

As a Puerto Rican from Logan Square, Acevedo said he felt alienated from the "down south kind of guys" and eventually lost interest before he even stopped being charged for dues. Although he said he regrets joining, Acevedo said his "conscience is clear."

"I didn't do anything wrong, other than now I'm going to be on a McCarthy-type of list," he said. "But I didn't go to any meetings, I didn't go to any training. I learned more about them post-Jan. 6 than I ever did before it."

Retamozo said in an interview that someone else signed him up around the time the Oath Keepers started in 2009, but he couldn't recall who. While he claimed he never paid dues, records show he and Acevedo separately signed up for "full member" plans that called for monthly payments of \$50 for 20 months.

Retainor, a Navy veteran, said he was attracted to the Oath Keepers because it was for "guys that believe in the Constitution." Now, he said he's appalled by what the group has become.

"It's like a slap in the face," he said of the Oath Keepers' role in the insurrection. "To me, it's like we gotta stand together to protect what we've got left of this country."

Anthony Keany said he's "never been a member of the Oath Keepers" and offered alternating explanations for how he may have wound up on the rolls.

Initially, he claimed someone else signed him up to "drag down" his reputation. In the same interview, he conceded that he'd crossed paths with members of the group at a military firing range and speculated they used his information "to inflate their numbers with police and military."

Oath Keepers membership records show he vowed to "pass the word" about the Oath Keepers to other cops, but he denied making that commitment or filling out any information. Like his colleagues, he decried the group's role in the Capitol riot.

"Obviously it's treason," he said. "If you go from being a pro-Second Amendment [group] to a treasonous act, I mean, that's horrendous. I feel bad for guys that got involved."

The other police officials connected to the group didn't respond to requests for comment.

John Catanzara, the president of the Chicago Fraternal Order of Police, cast the city's efforts to root out extremism as a "goofy witch hunt," insisting that officers should be judged by their actions and not associations that could date back years.

Catanzara said the investigations of cops linked to the far-right have gone too far, and he slammed Witzburg for repeatedly pressuring police officials to reopen cases.

Still, he expressed a willingness to purge the department of cops with “insane beliefs and practices.”

“No one’s promoting insurrection or overthrowing the government, or kidnapping like they crazily did with the plot with [Michigan Gov.] Gretchen Whitmer,” Catanzara said of the union. “But if our officers are engaged in that, then so be it. Get rid of them. We have no problem with that.”

*Dan Mihalopoulos is an investigative reporter on WBEZ’s Government & Politics Team. Tom Schuba covers police for the Sun-Times. Kevin G. Hall is North America editor for the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project.*



### About this story

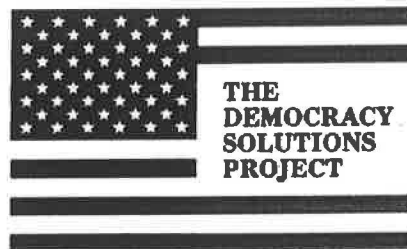
Design and development by Jesse Hlave

Video and video editing by Brian Ernst

Photos throughout the series by Ashlee Rezin, Pat Nabong, Victor Hilitiski, Manuel Martinez, and Anthony Vazquez

Reporters with the Chicago Sun-Times and WBEZ filed more than 200 open-records requests with the Chicago Police Department and other law enforcement agencies across Illinois. Those requests sought the personnel files for dozens of current and retired cops from the state whose names appeared in the leaked Oath Keepers membership data. [Read more about how we did the investigation here.](#)

A project in conjunction with

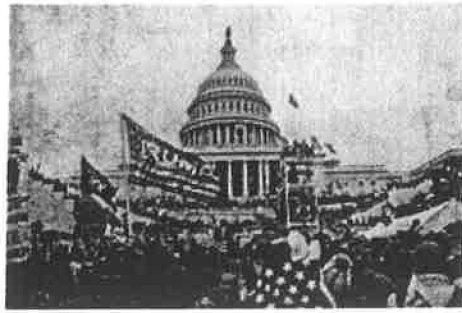


This investigation is a part of the Democracy Solutions Project, a joint effort between WBEZ, the Chicago Sun-Times and the University of Chicago’s Center for Effective Government exploring critical issues facing our democracy.



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October 22, 2023



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## How we investigated cops with ties to the Oath Keepers

Reporters with WBEZ and the Chicago Sun-Times filed more than 200 open records requests with the Chicago Police Department and other law enforcement agencies across Illinois.

By [Dan Mihalopoulos](#), [Tom Schuba](#) | Chicago Sun-Times

Oct 22, 2023, 6:00am CT



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Chicago Police Supt. Larry Snelling speaks to WBEZ investigative reporter Dan Mihalopoulos inside his office at the Chicago Police Department headquarters in the Bronzeville neighborhood on Oct. 17, 2023. Pat Nabong / Chicago Sun-Times

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insurrection at the U.S. Capitol, a list of about 38,000 people from across the country who had joined the anti-government extremist group emerged publicly through the nonprofit journalist collective Distributed Denial of Secrets.

Since then, the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project has obtained more detailed Oath Keepers membership data from a law enforcement source. That broader data set and another, newer list obtained by OCCRP span from 2009 — shortly after the Oath Keepers were founded — through 2018.

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The leaked spreadsheets used to report this story included:



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- How much they paid to join and to renew memberships, with different categories for varying member statuses.
- The reasons they gave the group for wanting to sign up.
- Extensive biographical details, including where individuals were working or how they had gained what they consider to be relevant experience.



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peace officers at the time they joined the group, in many cases sharing their work histories with multiple departments and describing any specialized weapons training they received.

Reporters with WBEZ and the Chicago Sun-Times then filed more than 200 open-records requests with the Chicago Police Department and other law enforcement agencies across Illinois. Those requests sought the personnel files for dozens of current and retired cops from the state whose names appeared in the leaked Oath Keepers membership data.

To verify the identity of the officers allegedly involved, the reporters then compared the records obtained from police departments against the information that the officers themselves had given to the Oath Keepers when they signed up, finding in case after case that they matched.

The reporters then examined thousands of pages of records from scores of misconduct cases involving the cops who had ties to the Oath Keepers. Those documents included details of the complaints against the officers and all records of how police investigated those cases.

The reporters also obtained and reviewed recordings of internal affairs interviews with the citizens who filed complaints against the cops, in some cases alleging racist mistreatment. WBEZ and the Sun-Times interviewed complainants themselves to hear about their experiences.

The open-records requests provided reporters with all public records from the few cases in which police officials conducted investigations into the officers' association with the Oath Keepers.

*Dan Mihalopoulos is an investigative reporter on WBEZ's Government & Politics Team. Tom Schuba covers police for the Sun-Times.*



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