

The Night of July 4th

On July 4, 2025, amid a wave of ICE raids and widespread resistance to deportations, a group of Texas residents gathered outside the Prairieland Detention Center in Alvarado, TX. Protesters chanted, set off fireworks, and spray-painted the facility before dispersing.

After the crowd broke up—and more than two football fields away—police reported that multiple shots were fired, allegedly wounding an officer. The officer was taken to a nearby hospital and released within hours.

Later that night, Alvarado Police arrested nine individuals from the Dallas/Fort Worth area, up to three miles from the protest site and three hours after the rally had ended. Early federal complaints cited “black clothing,” firearm ownership, and the possession of literature—all perfectly legal—as incriminating evidence.

In the weeks that followed, state and federal agents raided nearly 20 homes throughout the Dallas/Fort Worth region, detaining occupants—including children—at gunpoint. In one instance, agents attempted to bribe a defendant’s child to coerce testimony.

The factual picture of that night continues to evolve, but the official narrative presented by law-enforcement agencies has shifted repeatedly and contains notable inconsistencies.

Narrative Inconsistencies & Prosecutorial Misconduct

- Conflicting Ballistics Accounts** – Initial reports described multiple shooters firing up to 30 rounds; later filings reduce the incident to a single shooter with 11 rounds fired from a distant position.
- Injured Officer Lacks Medical Records** – despite being allegedly shot in the neck, the officer who was injured the night of July 4th at the Prairieland Detention Center has no medical records from his stay, and was discharged just hours after arriving.
- Explosives Claim vs. Holiday Tradition** – Prosecutors label fireworks used by demonstrators as “explosives,” yet fireworks are a customary part of July 4th celebrations nationwide.
- Detention Conditions** – While in custody, defendants have endured multiple daily strip searches, denial of medical care, and punitive measures such as being placed in a cell smeared with feces and forced to clean it. Several have spent months in solitary confinement—a practice the United Nations classifies as torture when prolonged beyond 15 days.
- County Sheriff Controversy** – In August 2025, Johnson County Sheriff Adam King—whose office originally held the Prairieland defendants—was arrested on charges of witness intimidation, sexual harassment, abuse of office, and later aggravated perjury.

By late November 2025, seven defendants have entered guilty pleas to a single count of “Providing Material Support to Terrorists.” Given the reported jail conditions and the sheriff’s misconduct, legal experts and concerned citizens are asking: were these pleas truly willing, knowing and voluntary?

Implications for Civil Liberties

This prosecution appears driven less by concrete evidence than by a broader political agenda. The Department of Justice is treating the Prairieland defendants as a test case in an expanding strategy to criminalize dissent against the current administration. Prosecutors rely heavily on items of ideological nature to tie their narrative together and set precedents to expand prosecutorial reach:

- **Pamphlets.** Daniel “Des” Sanchez, who was not present at the protest, now faces federal charges for allegedly transporting “Antifa material” (pamphlets) from his wife’s home the day after the rally.
- **Printers.** Elizabeth and Ines Soto were subjected to a second house raid months later—while still in custody—targeting nothing more than their household printer.
- **Thoughts.** In line with Trump’s recent National Security Presidential Mandate 7, which directs federal agencies to, among other things, identify future criminals based on ideological profiles, defendants political beliefs are cited extensively in criminal complaints and state and federal indictments as “proof” of conspiracy.

The administration is intent on redefining ordinary expressions of protest as “material support for terrorism.” Over the past decade, state and federal agencies have slowly advanced their criminalization of dissent. In 2016, anti-Trump protesters were charged with Conspiracy for dressing in black clothing and attending a protest at the DC presidential inauguration. In 2023, activists in Atlanta were charged with Racketeering for offenses ranging from distributing pamphlets to wearing black clothing. And now, in Texas, these same acts are being classified as Material Support for Terrorism.

If upheld, these precedents could dramatically narrow the space for lawful protest and free expression across the United States.

Key Questions for Journalists, Legal Experts, and Community Members

- Were the 7 guilty pleas made freely, without coercion or undue pressure?
- How reliable are the evolving police and prosecutorial narratives surrounding the shooting?
- What precedent does this case set for the criminalization of ordinary protest activities—such as wearing black clothing, using face coverings, or possessing political literature?

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Timeline of Events

July 4th: 9 people arrested including: Nathan Baumann, Megan Morris, Joy Gibson, Zachary Evetts, Seth Sikes, Ines Soto, Elizabeth Soto, Savanna Batten, Maricela Rueda.

July 5th: Raid on Megan Morris' house, Autumn Hill is arrested.

July 5th through July ~18th: FBI conducted raids on homes of activists, their families, friends, etc.

July 6th: Daniel "Des" Estrada Sanchez is arrested transporting "zines" from home in Garland to Denton, TX. Des' house is raided along with the apartment in Denton, TX. No arrest made in Denton household.

July 8th: Raid on John Thomas' house. Thomas questioned and cooperated. From the criminal complaint dated July 14th: "Thomas claimed that on July 5th, the day after the shooting, he did not leave the Churchill Way residence until 8:00pm, when he left to meet three individuals at the Days Inn in Cleburne, TX. Thomas later admitted that they met to discuss the shooting and getting Song out of the area of Prairieland Detention Center, which Thomas did, picking up Song and transporting him to Churchill Way residence."

July 10th: John Phillip Thomas is arrested, held on \$5 million bond for a smuggling of persons charge.

July 13th: Lynette Sharp is arrested, held on a \$2.5 million bond for a charge of hindering prosecution of terrorism.

July 15th: Dario Sanchez is arrested.

July 15th: Benjamin Song and Rebecca Morgan are arrested.

July 16th: Update from fundraiser states: Defendants' friends and family report raids of their homes where agents deployed flashbang grenades, caused extensive damage, and detained spouses, family members and housemates without cause. In one instance, federal agents tackled the child of a defendant and put a bag over their head before arresting them and transporting them to jail. "I was terrified, I had no idea what was going on," the child later said. During this interrogation, agents offered this person monetary bribes in exchange for information, which of course were refused. Police also attempted to extort them by offering to "get rid of a warrant" if they cooperated with the law enforcement investigation.

July 18th: Update from fundraiser states: 15 people have been arrested in relation to the noise demo on July 4th, each facing some combination of state and federal charges, to which more may be well added.

August 7th: Susan Kent arrested. Charged with "engaging in organized criminal activity" and "hindering prosecution of terrorism."

August 20th: Dario Sanchez is bonded out, per DA agreement.

Timeline of Events - continued

August 28th: Dario Sanchez is arrested again. DA decided to add more charges and make the bond higher so he had to self surrender and go through another hearing. Indicted on hindering prosecution of terrorism and tampering with physical evidence. As of 11/25/25, Dario does not have federal charges, only state charges.

September 2nd: Dario Sanchez is released.

September 22nd and 23rd: 14 defendants had federal arraignments which was the first federal legal movement in the case since the initial arrests in July.

September 22nd: Dario Sanchez is arrested again for "violation of parole" for a google search that was actually conducted by his parole officer and not Dario himself.

September 23: Rebecca Morgan and Lynette Sharp listed under federal custody.

September 24th: Dario Sanchez is released once again.

Late September: Right before they were moved to federal custody Liz and Ines Soto's house was raided again and the printers were taken.

October 1st: the state of Texas indicted 14 defendants on their state charges, adding an additional charge of "engaging in organized criminal activity" for all 14. 2 defendants have no state indictments as of October 11. In total, 15 defendants have been indicted on state charges, so at least 13 people will be fighting concurrent federal and state cases and hence will require legal representation on both fronts.

October 15th: First federal indictments. Autumn Hill and Zachary Evetts, were indicted by a federal grand jury Wednesday on three counts of attempted murder of officers and employees of the United States, three counts of discharging a firearm during a crime of violence and one count of providing material support to terrorists. Patrick McLain, Evetts' attorney, said his client has already pleaded not guilty to the charges. Evetts, he said, was exercising his First Amendment rights while protesting current immigration policy at the U.S. Immigrations and Customs Enforcement detention center, and there's no evidence he fired shots.

October 21st: Jannette Goering is arrested and as of 11/25/25, only has state charges.

October 27 - November 12: Seth Sikes, Rebecca Morgan, Joy Gibson, Lynette Sharp, John Thomas, Nathan Baumann, and Susan Kent sign federal plea deals to one count each of "Providing Material Support to Terrorists." They each face up to 15 years in prison and will be sentenced in March. Kent has pleaded not guilty to state charges of engaging in organized criminal activity and hindering the prosecution of terrorism, both first-degree felonies. Her trial is set for March.

Timeline of Events - continued

November 13th: Autumn Hill, Zachary Evetts, Benjamin Song, Meagan Morris, Ines Soto, Liz Soto, Savanna Batten, Maricela Rueda, and Daniel Sanchez Estrada were federally indicted together on the same case. These defendants except for Sanchez Estrada were indicted on a range of charges including riot, material support of terrorism, use of explosive, attempted murder, and discharge of a deadly weapon. Sanchez Estrada was indicted on corruptly concealing a document and conspiracy to conceal a document.

- Riot, with the intent to commit an act of violence, involving conduct such as shooting and throwing fireworks and explosives, slashing tires on a government vehicle, spraying graffiti on property and vehicles, destroying a closed circuit camera, shooting at officers, and dressing in black bloc.
 - Defendants charged: Cameron Arnold, Zachary Evetts, Benjamin Song, Savanna Batten, Bradford Morris, Maricela Rueda, Elizabeth Soto, Ines Soto
- Providing Material Support to Terrorists, including property, services, training, communications equipment, weapons, explosives, personnel (including themselves), and transportation.
 - Defendants charged: Arnold, Evetts, Song, Batten, Morris, Rueda, E. Soto, and I. Soto
- Conspiracy to Use and Carry an Explosive, and Using and Carrying an Explosive, during a riot.
 - Defendants charged: Arnold, Evetts, Song, Batten, Morris, Rueda, E. Soto, and I. Soto
- Attempted Murder of Officers and Employees of the United States, involving the unlawful attempt to kill with malice aforethought Correctional Officers-1 and 2, and an Alvarado Police Officer.
 - Defendants charged: Song, Arnold, Evetts, Morris, and Rueda
- Discharging a Firearm During, and in Relation to, and in Furtherance of a Crime of Violence, i.e., the attempted murder of two correctional officers and an Alvarado Police Officer.
 - Defendants charged: Song, Arnold, Evetts, Morris, and Rueda
- Corruptly Concealing a Document or Record, by transporting a box containing numerous Antifa materials, such as insurrection planning, anti-law enforcement, anti-government, and anti-immigration enforcement documents and propaganda from Sanchez Estrada's residence to a location in Denton, Texas, intending to conceal the box's contents and impair its availability for use in a federal grand jury and federal criminal proceeding.
 - Defendant charged: Daniel Rolando Sanchez Estrada
- Conspiracy to Conceal Documents and other objects that would implicate Maricela Rueda in the riot and shooting at the Prairieland facility.
 - Defendants charged: Sanchez Estrada and Maricela Rueda

November 25th: Des is released from ICE holding facility.

December 4th: Des turns himself into federal custody.

*Every arrest has had subsequent raid on defendant's house. Totaling 20 raids thus far. With a second raid on Ines and Liz' home in September.

Dario Sanchez's trial is currently set for January, 12 2026

Federal trial for all defendants indicted on Nov 13 is currently set for February 17, 2026