

ICE is cracking down on people who follow them in their cars

REUTERS: By Ted Hesson, Kristina Cooke and Brad Heath

February 10, 2026 6:03 AM EST Updated 24 mins ago

ICE is cracking down on US citizen protesters with charges, tracking

- Summary
- Federal assault and obstruction charges doubled since ICE crackdown began
- Videos show immigration officers drawing weapons on protesters
- Trump officials say ICE officers face assaults, threats

WASHINGTON, Feb 10 (Reuters) - Becky Ringstrom was heading home after following federal immigration officers in her gray Kia SUV in suburban Minneapolis when she was suddenly boxed in by unmarked vehicles. At least a half-dozen masked agents jumped out to arrest her, one knocking on her windshield with a metal object as if threatening to use it to break her window.

After the arrest, captured on bystander video verified by Reuters, the 42-year-old mother of seven later said she was transported to Bishop Henry Whipple Federal Building in Minneapolis where an officer gave her a citation charging her under a federal law that criminalizes impeding law enforcement. The official said her name and photo would be added to a government database.

The Reuters Inside Track newsletter is your essential guide to the biggest events in global sport. Sign up [here](#).

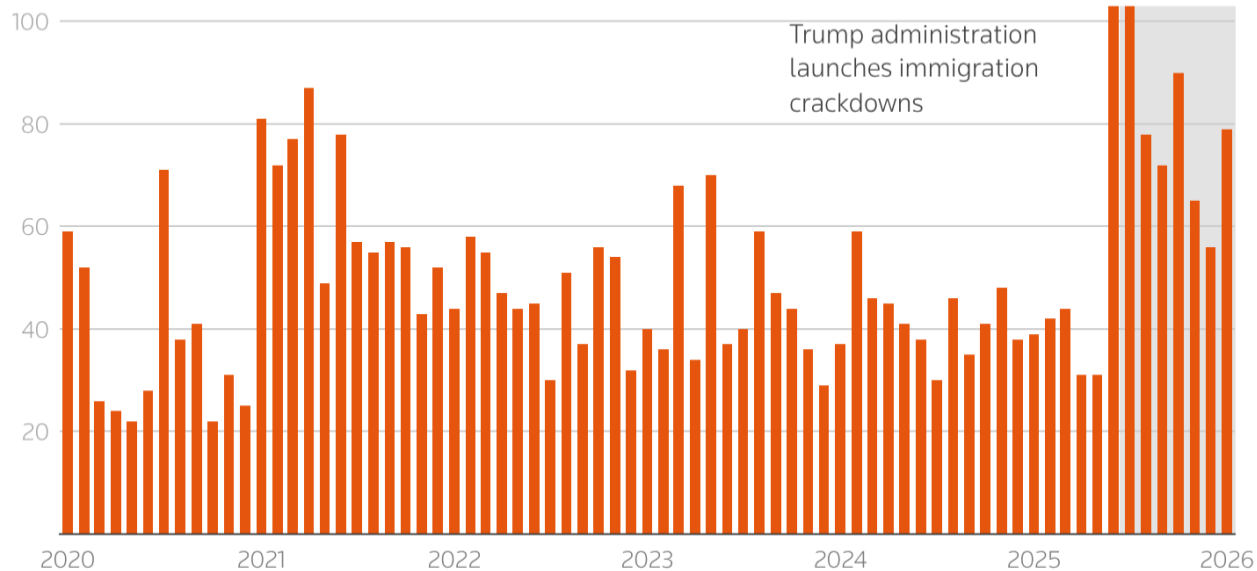
Advertisement · Scroll to continue

The arrest of Ringstrom became the latest detention of one of [thousands of local activists](#) for violating Title 18, Section 111 of the U.S. Code, a catch-all charge for anyone who “forcibly assaults, resists, opposes, impedes, intimidates, or interferes” with a federal officer conducting official duties. The statute can be charged as a felony or misdemeanor. As a felony, it carries up to 20 years in prison, but penalties beyond eight years are reserved for people who use “a deadly or dangerous weapon” or cause an injury. A Reuters review of federal court records found that the Trump administration has prosecuted at least 655 people under that charge across the U.S. since a series of city-focused immigration crackdowns began last summer. That’s more than double the prosecutions during the same period in 2024-2025, according to a review of publicly available criminal filings in Westlaw, a legal research database owned by Thomson Reuters.

Advertisement · Scroll to continue

More charges for interfering with feds

The number of people charged each month with violating the law that makes it a federal crime to assault or impede federal agents jumped as the government launched immigration crackdowns



Source: Reuters analysis of federal court dockets from Westlaw

The number of people charged by month with violating the law that makes it a federal crime to assault or impede federal agents

Reuters used artificial intelligence in some instances to classify the charges, with a spot-check showing 98% accuracy. The numbers are nationwide and Reuters was not able to determine how many were connected to immigration enforcement, how many were charged as felonies, or resulted in convictions. The charges are part of a broader effort by the Trump administration to clamp down on ICE opponents, who they portray as rioters who pose threats to officers and undermine their efforts to arrest immigrants with criminal records.

"Assaulting and obstructing law enforcement is a felony," said U.S. Department of Homeland Security spokesperson Tricia McLaughlin. She said federal immigration officers "used the minimum amount of force necessary to protect themselves, the public, and federal property."

ICE has been tracking the names of protesters in an internal database for several months, according to two U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss operations.

The government database contains names, photos, actions that provoked suspicion, locations and license plates, the officials said, adding that the effort was intended to spot patterns that could lead to charges. DHS said it does not maintain a database of U.S. "domestic terrorists," but does track threats. "We do of course monitor and investigate and refer all threats, assaults and obstruction of our officers to the appropriate law enforcement," McLaughlin said.

One of the officials said ICE was referring several people per day in Minnesota alone to federal prosecutors for potential charges under the same law for interfering with police operations.

White House spokeswoman Abigail Jackson said the Trump administration was committed to protecting First Amendment freedoms, but that people impeding law enforcement "will be held accountable to the fullest extent of the law."

OBSERVING ICE

Ringstrom had watched federal immigration officers for about 45 minutes as they sat in a parked car in her neighborhood on Thursday, January 29. When they started to move, she decided to follow along in her SUV, keeping a distance of multiple car lengths behind, she said.

At a roundabout, a Border Patrol agent approached her car and said, "Last time I'm going to warn you," according to video Ringstrom recorded on her phone.

The officers went right at a stop sign and she went left, she said. Several minutes later as she started to head back toward her house, multiple vehicles with federal officers stopped and arrested her, she said.

"I know what I'm doing is not wrong," Ringstrom said later in an interview with Reuters.

Still, she said she was terrified when federal officers approached her car. "There was a moment where I thought I could be Renee Good," she said, referring to one of the two U.S. citizen protesters [fatally shot](#) by federal immigration officers in Minneapolis in January.

After her arrest, she was issued a citation, reviewed by Reuters, which said the court date was "TBD" - to be determined.

McLaughlin said Ringstrom "stalked law enforcement and attempted to obstruct law enforcement from performing their sworn duties."

Seth Stoughton, a professor focused on policing at University of South Carolina School of Law, said the law in the past mostly has been used to charge assaults on officers and specifically states that the alleged crime must be committed "forcibly."

"Without any physical contact, just following an agent in a car, it's not clear to me that that's resistance or impeding in the first place, and it certainly seems like a stretch to establish that as forcible," Stoughton said.

A federal judge in Minneapolis [said in a mid-January order](#) that a vehicle following ICE at "an appropriate distance" did not justify a traffic stop or arrest, but that order [was paused](#) by an appeals court 10 days later.

The judge's now-paused order did not say what exact distance would be deemed safe.

Deborah Fleischaker, a top ICE official under former President Joe Biden, said it was "inappropriate and unconstitutional" to intimidate and arrest people peacefully following immigration officers in their cars.



Item 1 of 3 Rebecca Ringstrom is detained by federal immigration agents, as she observed an immigration enforcement operation in her neighborhood, in Blaine, Minnesota, U.S., January 29, 2026, in this screen grab obtained from a video. Collette Adkins/via REUTERS

[1/3]Rebecca Ringstrom is detained by federal immigration agents, as she observed an immigration enforcement operation in her neighborhood, in Blaine, Minnesota, U.S., January 29, 2026, in this screen grab obtained from a video. Collette Adkins/via REUTERS [Purchase Licensing Rights. opens new tab](#)

“Observing ICE activities is not a crime and should not be treated as such,” she said.

McLaughlin said U.S. Border Patrol agents at the scene gave Ringstrom “lawful commands and warnings” but that she continued to obstruct operations, leading to her arrest.

“When agitators willingly involve themselves and inject themselves in law enforcement operations, they are risking arrest as well as jeopardizing the safety of themselves and those around them,” McLaughlin said.

VIDEOS SHOW ICE OFFICERS DRAWING WEAPONS

While new internal ICE guidance, [reported by Reuters](#) in late January, instructed officers not to engage with protesters, the encounters have not stopped.

Two videos in recent weeks verified by Reuters showed ICE officers drawing their weapons as they approached vehicles that allegedly had been following them.

South of Minneapolis on January 29, the same day Ringstrom was arrested, federal immigration officers abruptly swerved, stopped their vehicle and approached a woman driving behind them with guns drawn, according to dashcam footage from her vehicle [first reported, opens new tab](#) by Minnesota Public Radio and verified by Reuters.

McLaughlin said ICE officers were attempting to arrest a criminal offender when the woman began “stalking and obstructing” them, leading the officers to try to arrest her.

“Law enforcement officers attempted to pull her over using their emergency lights to issue her a warning,” McLaughlin said. “Ignoring law enforcement commands, the agitator refused to pull over and began driving recklessly including running stop signs, nearly colliding with multiple vehicles, and driving directly at law enforcement in an attempt to ram their vehicle.”

Reuters was not able to independently verify whether the woman ignored commands or drove recklessly. In a [separate incident, opens new tab](#) on February 3, two ICE officers approached a car that had been following them, again, with guns drawn, according to video verified by Reuters and a DHS statement. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security said the vehicle had been “stalking” and “obstructing” ICE officers. “The agitators then followed the officers as they departed and made hand motions suggestive of possessing a firearm,” DHS said. Reuters could not independently verify the agency’s account. The video reviewed by Reuters showed the vehicles once they had stopped.

Under Trump, numerous DHS statements after violent encounters with immigration agents [have been inaccurate or incomplete](#).

ICE AT YOUR FRONT DOOR

Some Minnesota residents say they believe they are becoming the subject of an intimidation campaign. In a suburb north of St. Paul on January 22, an ICE officer led a woman who was following his vehicle back to her house, making it clear that he knew her identity and address, Reuters-verified video filmed by the husband showed.

The woman’s husband spoke to the ICE officer outside of the couple’s house. When the husband questioned the tactic, the officer said, “You raise your voice, I erase your voice,” the video showed. One ICE officer told Reuters they have led people following them back to their houses after running their license plates “to freak them out.” McLaughlin said ICE would review body camera footage and investigate the incident in St. Paul, but did not comment on ICE using the tactic to frighten opponents. Earlier in January, two friends - Brandon Siguenza and Patty O’Keefe - who were [following an ICE vehicle](#) in Minneapolis said officers fired pepper spray into their car, smashed their car window and detained them for eight hours.

McLaughlin said officers gave them multiple warnings “to stop impeding” operations, but that they “chose to continue to stalk law enforcement and were arrested.”

“The passenger refused to roll down the window and exit the vehicle,” McLaughlin said. “ICE law enforcement followed their training and used the minimum amount of force necessary to make the arrest.”

McLaughlin did not explicitly confirm that officers broke the car window or deployed pepper spray. Siguenza and O’Keefe have not been charged.

(This story has been refiled to remove the word 'downtown' in paragraph 2)

Reporting by Ted Hesson and Brad Heath in Washington, and Kristina Cooke in San Francisco. Additional reporting by Maria Tsvetkova, Monica Naime, Vinaya K, Marine Delrue, Tiffany Le, Fernando Robles and Gerardo Gomez. Editing by Craig Timberg, Diane Craft and Michael Learmonth