

Rumors of ICE agents housed in Deerfield area sparks protests



By Joseph States

Rumors that Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents have been staying at a Deerfield-area hotel sparked two days of protests at a nearby intersection this week, as Lake County organizations warn of continuing arrests by federal immigration enforcement agents in the area.

Thursday saw a small crowd of protesters at a Deerfield-area intersection. Protesters said they were responding to reports that federal agents were being housed at a local hotel.

One of the organizers of the event, Highland Park resident David Borris, is a member of North Shore Says No!, an organization formed in response to news that Naval Station Great Lakes might be used as housing for federal immigration enforcement efforts. Since then, members have regularly met at overpasses in the region for “visibility events,” he said.

Borris claimed that they and other area organizations had “99% confirmed” the presence of federal agents at the hotel, including through the use of a database of license plates seen on federal immigration enforcement vehicles that matched several in the hotel’s parking lot.

In response to questions about whether agents are being housed at hotels or similar facilities due to a shortage of official housing options for agents, and if the agency had any comments about previous or future protests occurring at such locations, Department of Homeland Security spokesperson Tricia McLaughlin declined to discuss where or how federal agents are being housed while working in the area.

“Our agents are facing a 1,000% increase in assaults and an 8,000% increase in death threats against them, and you want us to reveal where they sleep?” McLaughlin said. “You’re insane.”

Borris railed against the federal government’s immigration enforcement efforts, which have sparked widespread protests across the country and in the Chicago area.

Lake County has found itself caught up in the larger Operation Midway Blitz, a surge of immigration law enforcement in the area meant to target “criminal illegal aliens,” according to the DHS under President Donald Trump.

Over a recent weekend, Lake County saw at least a dozen people arrested by federal agents, according to community organizers. A DHS spokesperson said in an email that the “illegal aliens” arrested in Lake County came from El Salvador, Mexico and Nicaragua. They had criminal backgrounds. DHS did not provide the names of the detainees so their criminal histories could be confirmed, or where any crimes took place.

Borris said the immigration enforcement has been “destroying families” with few of the benefits Trump has talked about. The “cruelty is the point,” Borris said.

While Borris is a longtime activist on several issues, he noted he was seeing people at events who have “never held a protest sign” until this year. As more people feel the need to protest, he said his organization gives people a place for their outrage while connecting them with other activists.

“People understand viscerally that the emergency is here,” Borris said. “Who’s left to stem the tide? We are the ones we’ve been waiting for. People feel that.”

The small crowd of protesters carried signs and cheered as motorists driving by honked their horns in support. The group included 78-year-old Sally Nador, a retired psychologist from Wilmette who was wearing an inflatable giraffe costume.

“What’s going on is just plain wrong,” she said. “We’re a country of immigrants.”

Referring to the federal agents, Nador said, “They shouldn’t be here.”

The retiree said it was “comforting” to see others out protesting.

“It helps to not be alone in these sorts of things,” Nador said.