I've been following local news coverage of the ICE incident in South Burlington closely, as well as talking to many people who were there. As more information has emerged, it has become abundantly clear that ICE would not have been able to abduct the three people that they took with them without extensive support from local and state police. **The question we are all asking is, why did local and state police back ICE?**

From how things played out, it appears that local and (especially) state law enforcement saw it as their duty to support ICE in carrying out their warrant. But it is in no way clear that local and state law enforcement was legally obliged to assist ICE at all, even once they had a judicial warrant. The warrant was federal, and local law enforcement cannot obstruct but is not obligated to carry out federal warrants.

Regardless, when non-ICE officers realized that the person named in the warrant was not even present -- and that ICE was arresting three people for whom it had no warrant whatsoever -- their duty should have been the opposite: to intervene and prevent a warrantless abduction of presumed-innocent people.

And warrants aside, it seems that **the key driver of how local and state law enforcement acted was an instinct to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with fellow law enforcement.** Even though local and state police were visibly and vocally angry about ICE's actions and took many actions specifically to protect protesters from ICE, when they were forced to make a choice, they sided with ICE.

The time has come to break that instinct. Federal law enforcement is no longer law enforcement in any meaningful sense. ICE in particular is now a poorly trained and ideologically motivated presidential police force tasked with ethnic cleansing. (Similarly, the FBI is now a gang of mob enforcers for the boss' personal vendettas.) This is a huge loss. While federal law enforcement has never been anything close to perfect, it has always recognizably been law enforcement. That is no longer true.

What might it have looked like if local and state police had declined to side with ICE, and had instead focused solely on their duty to protect the public? I wasn't there and I'm not an expert, so take this all just as a thought experiment. But here is one take on how things could have unfolded differently:

- Local and state law enforcement officers would have formed a cordon around the protesters, preventing any ICE agents from approaching them (or entering the house) before a judicial warrant was obtained
- Once a warrant was obtained, they would have been much more forceful in pushing ICE to abandon or delay attempting to arrest the person named in the warrant, as proceeding under the circumstances was analogous to a high-speed car chase on a crowded street (something that responsible law enforcement agencies now strongly discourage)
- If ICE insisted on moving forward, local and state police would have have informed ICE agents that they: a) were not going to assist them in any way; and b) would not tolerate any violent behavior towards any members of the public

- If this did not deter ICE from proceeding, they would have watched them closely and intervened to protect specific individuals, putting themselves between an ICE agent and the person they were harming
- If ICE agents managed to enter the house on their own, local and state police would have noted that they emerged with three people via a warrant that named only one person, checked the identities of the people arrested against the warrant, and confronted ICE agents about the fact that they were making warrantless arrests based on nothing but apparent ethnicity
- If ICE agents refused to release the people they had arrested, local and state police would have refused to assist them with extracting those people from the scene, intervening only to protect those people as well as protesters from ICE
- If ICE agents made it to their vehicles with the arrestees, local and state police would not have cleared a path for them to leave, but rather would have stood in the road between the vehicles and the protesters to protect the protesters, urging ICE agents to abandon their warrantless arrests and leave on foot

In the context of how events actually unfolded, the fact that a minority of protesters were aggressive towards law enforcement is pretty clearly a direct result of the fact that local and state police backed ICE. **If BPD, SBPD, and VSP had responded as outlined above, they would have been met with near-universal appreciation and support.** So while I do not condone screaming or spitting at law enforcement officers, I lay the fact that this happened squarely at the feet of local and state law enforcement. People felt betrayed, and they responded accordingly.

The alternate scenario outlined above is fundamentally different from what actually happened. But we are living in fundamentally changed times. **Protecting the public from rogue federal agents will take incredible bravery on the part of Vermont law enforcement. But I believe that -- with leadership from our elected officials -- our men and women in uniform can and will come through.**