

ANALYSIS

Labeling Renee Good a “Domestic Terrorist” Distorts the Law

The Trump administration’s misuse of the term reached new levels after an ICE officer killed Good in her car.



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Government Power

On January 7, an Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent shot and killed Minneapolis mother Renee Good as her wife watched from mere steps away. The reaction from the Trump administration was swift. In a press conference held the evening of the shooting, DHS Secretary Kristi Noem [claimed](#) [\[link-1\]](#) that Good, who was behind the wheel of her car,

“attempted to run a law enforcement officer over,” calling it “an act of domestic terrorism.” Vice President JD Vance [called](#) [\[link-2\]](#) the interaction “classic terrorism” and [insinuated](#) [\[link-3\]](#) that protesters are engaging in “domestic terror techniques.”

Let’s start with the obvious. Federal agents are not allowed to execute a

woman in cold blood. Not even if JD Vance says she's a domestic terrorist. The legal process is arrest, indictment, and trial.

But it is also important to be clear: Renee Good was not a domestic terrorist.

Domestic terrorism has a specific [statutory definition](#) [\[link-4\]](#). It covers “activities that involve acts dangerous to human life,” violate criminal law, “appear to be intended to intimidate or coerce a civilian population” or to “influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion,” and occur primarily within the U.S. To actually be called a “domestic terrorist,” an individual must commit one or more of 51 [underlying](#) [\[link-5\]](#) “[federal crimes of terrorism](#)” [\[link-6\]](#).” Many of them involve nuclear or chemical weapons, plastic explosives, maritime violations, air piracy, and

other charges that are [clearly inapplicable](#) [\[link-7\]](#) here.

Instead, U.S. officials have accused Good, in the face of explicit video evidence to the contrary, of “weaponizing her vehicle” by attempting to run over the ICE agent who killed her.

Killing or attempting to kill a federal officer or employee to intimidate a civilian population or influence government policy is one of the [crimes](#) [\[link-8\]](#) that can give rise to a domestic terrorism charge. But analysis of video footage by [multiple](#) [\[link-9\]](#) [news outlets](#) [\[link-10\]](#) [\[link-11\]](#) indicates that she was attempting to maneuver her car away from federal agents at the time she was shot. And it appears likely that the agent [violated](#) [\[link-12\]](#) internal ICE guidance in escalating to deadly force. While there is still some dispute over the precise level of

[danger](#) [\[link-13\]](#) the ICE officer was in, the publicly available videos simply do not depict an individual trying to kill a law enforcement officer. Certainly not with the intent that would satisfy the narrow statutory definition of domestic terrorism.

Notably, the administration has repeatedly attempted to substantially expand the domestic terrorism legal framework. President Trump issued a presidential [memorandum](#) [\[link-14\]](#) in September that [cherry-picks evidence](#) [\[link-15\]](#) to suggest that a left-wing conspiracy aims to carry out acts of political violence that should be pursued as domestic terrorism. A leaked December [memo](#) [\[link-16\]](#) from Attorney General Pam Bondi [directs the machinery](#) [\[link-17\]](#) of the Department of Justice to target activists as domestic terrorists

while deprioritizing other enforcement.

The president cannot rewrite the statute or transform Good into a domestic terrorist. The administration's legal maneuvers do, however, help explain why the federal government announced it would be focusing its primary [investigative efforts](#) [\[link-18\]](#) not on the shooting but on Good herself, her widow, and local Minneapolis activist groups, leading six federal prosecutors to [resign](#) [\[link-19\]](#) in protest.

The Trump administration is right about one thing: there are bona fide domestic terrorists living among us. Two dozen of the January 6 defendants were convicted of and sentenced for crimes of domestic terrorism under the U.S. Code. Trump granted them all clemency on his second day in office. The administration now invokes domestic terrorism to justify a

McCarthy-esque investigation,
tarnish Good's name, and terrorize

its opponents. In doing so, it makes
a mockery of the law.

MORE ON

Rule of Law [\[link-20\]](#)

Links

link-1: claimed <https://www.rev.com/transcripts/noem-speaks-on-mn-ice-shooting>

link-2: called <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2026/jan/09/white-house-minneapolis-ice-killing>

link-3: insinuated <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/trump-administration/vance-says-death-minnesota-woman-killed-ice-was-tragedy-making-rcna253063>

link-4: statutory definition <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/18/2331>

link-5: underlying https://www.brennancenter.org/media/120/download/Report_Wrong_Priorities_Terrorism.pdf?inline=1

link-6: federal crimes of terrorism https://www.law.cornell.edu/definitions/uscode.php?width=840&height=800&iframe=true&def_id=18-USC-763651625-782330727&term_occur=999&term_src=title:18:part:I:chapter:113B:section:2332b

link-7: clearly inapplicable <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/wrong-priorities-fighting-terrorism>

link-8: crimes <https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=granuleid:USC-prelim-title18-section1114&num=0&edition=prelim>

link-9: multiple <https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/2026/01/08/video-ice-shooting-minneapolis/>

link-10: news <https://www.nytimes.com/video/us/100000010631041/minneapolis-ice-shooting-video.html>

link-11: outlets <https://www.cbsnews.com/minnesota/news/experts-analyze-new-video-fatal-ice-shooting-minneapolis/>

link-12: violated <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/01/15/us/politics/trump-ice-immunity.html>

link-13: danger <https://www.cnn.com/2026/01/09/us/video/ice-agents-cellphone-footage-raises-new-questions-invs>

link-14: memorandum <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/09/countering-domestic-terrorism-and-organized-political-violence/>

link-15: cherry-picks evidence <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/trumps-orders-targeting-antifascism-aim-criminalize-opposition>

link-16: memo <https://s3.documentcloud.org/documents/26371599/bondi-memo-on-countering-domestic-terrorism-and-organized-political-violence-1.pdf?inline=1>

link-17: directs the machinery <https://www.lawfaremedia.org/article/the-bondi-memo-s-quiet-rewriting-of-domestic-terrorism-rules>

link-18: investigative efforts <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/01/12/us/politics/fbi-renee-good-ice-shooting.html>

link-19: resign <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/01/13/us/prosecutors-doj-resignation-ice-shooting.html?smid=nytcore-ios-share>

link-20: Rule of Law <https://www.brennancenter.org/topics/government-power/rule-law>