

Vigilantes or patriots? FBI arrests head of militia rounding up illegal migrants at US border

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Federal agents have detained the head of New Mexico's people's militia group, whose volunteer forces have 'helped' US border agents detain hundreds of illegal immigrants along the US-Mexico border, for illegal possession of arms.

Larry Mitchell Hopkins, who runs the United Constitutional Patriots (UCP) was arrested on Saturday on charges of possessing firearms and ammunition as a convicted felon, the FBI said. No other information was shared with the public. The 69-year-old is due to appear in US District Court in Las Cruces, New Mexico on Monday.

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*"This is a dangerous felon who should not have weapons around children and families,"* New Mexico Attorney General Hector Balderas stated.

***Today's arrest by the FBI indicates clearly that the rule of law should be in the hands of trained law enforcement officials, not armed vigilantes.***

The militia, made up mostly of veterans armed with guns and other tactical gear, had volunteered to help the Border Patrol agents deal with a wave of immigrants in the vicinity of Sunland Park, New Mexico until President Trump's wall is built there. Their tactics, however,

triggered a massive backlash as they were seen chasing down suspected illegals and holding them at gunpoint before surrendering them to US authorities.

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This week, Hopkin's 'vigilante patriots' detained nearly 300 people in the desert. Footage of what they call 'citizen's arrests' –and what critics denounce as simple 'kidnapping'– showed a big crowd, including women and children kneeling on the ground waiting for government officers to pick them up.

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While the group believes their harsh tactics are legal and necessary to stop what President Trump calls an "*invasion*" over the US southern border, UCP's methods have not been welcomed by New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham, who noted that "*regular citizens have no authority to arrest or detain anyone.*" Meanwhile, the American Civil Liberties Union called them a "*fascist militia*" and demanded that authorities investigate the organization.

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