

The Oregonian

Citing Deep Distrust, Portland Pulls From FBI Anti-Terror Panel

*By Gordon Friedman
February 14, 2019*

The Portland City Council voted 3-2 Wednesday to withdraw the city from the Federal Bureau of Investigation's anti-terrorism task force, citing a deep distrust in the program's ability to root out terrorism while upholding residents' civil rights.

Wednesday's vote also represents the first major policy victory for Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty, a long-time criminal justice reform advocate who was sworn onto the council in January. She had pledged a withdrawal from the task force would be among her first priorities in office.

"When we talk about one Portland, a Portland where everyone is respected, we cannot in good conscience continue our engagement with the Joint Terrorism Task Force," Hardesty said.

The decision to withdraw was close, with Commissioners Amanda Fritz, Chloe Eudaly and Hardesty voting in support and Mayor Ted Wheeler and Commissioner Nick Fish opposed.

"I cannot support a policy that appears to value politics and ideology over the safety of Portland," Wheeler said. He called Wednesday's in-or-out decision a "false choice" that did not take into account commissioners' ability to modify the city's agreement with the FBI to add new oversight measures and allay concerns of misconduct.

"If working alongside our intelligence and law enforcement partners is no longer the plan, what is the plan?" Wheeler said.

Fritz, Eudaly and Hardesty said they were not convinced city membership in the task force was to Portlanders' benefit.

"There is no evidence that participation has made Portland safer," Fritz said.

"Do you feel safer today than you did five years ago?" Eudaly asked the audience at City Hall. "I don't."

Membership in the Joint Terrorism Task Force gives select Portland law enforcement officials access to federal agencies' information about potential terrorist activities in the area. The officials review hundreds of tips each year, assess threats and open investigations that occasionally lead to prosecutions. The group's most high-profile case during Portland's membership involved the 2002 arrests of the Portland Seven, a group of locals who attempted to join an al Qaeda cell.

But with Wednesday's vote, Portland now has 90 days to leave the task force. That means two Portland Police Bureau officers within the bureau's Criminal Intelligence Unit who are assigned to the task force will be given other work.

The pull-out is the latest twist in Portland's on-again, off-again relationship with the FBI group, which the city joined in 1997, left in 2005, rejoined partly in 2011 and fully rejoined in 2015.

Law enforcement officials have said Portland's membership in the task force is an essential component in the local fight against terrorism. Renn Cannon, special agent in charge of the FBI's

Portland field office, and U.S. Attorney Billy Williams in recent weeks pleaded with the mayor and commissioners to stay in the program.

In a pre-recorded video message to the city council, Portland Police Chief Danielle Outlaw said leaving the task force was “not in the best interest of our city’s public safety” and that she feared Portland police officers would become “walled off” from valuable information about terror plots.

A driving force behind the city’s decision to withdraw once again was testimony from residents and civil rights activists who said the Joint Terrorism Task Force unlawfully targeted Muslims and people of color for surveillance and immigrants for deportation – actions they say spurred members of those groups to become fearful of law enforcement and view the FBI in an irredeemable light.

Members of the city council also expressed skepticism the task force was acting within the bounds of state and local laws. They said occasional reports from the FBI about task force work were threadbare, and lacked the transparency officials need to feel comfortable with the arrangement.

That doubt was brought into full view Tuesday, when the mayor and commissioners held a public briefing with Cannon, Williams and other officials.

In a remarkable exchange during that meeting, Hardesty asked Williams if he believes in Oregon’s sanctuary law, which bans local law enforcement agencies from assisting U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents if a suspect’s only offense is residing in the country illegally.

Williams responded that federal officials are “not required to follow Oregon law.” When Hardesty said Williams could not selectively support some Oregon laws and not others, he retorted, “That’s your opinion, commissioner.” Hardesty responded, “And I’m entitled to have one, I guess.”

During Wednesday evening’s vote, a majority of the commissioners said they remained unconvinced to put their faith in the local-federal partnership.

“Trust is not earned by saying ‘You can trust me,’” Fritz said.

Wheeler said he accepts that the city will withdraw from the task force and pledged the city will “rise to the occasion” to protect Portlanders in what ways it can, even if it must do so “from the sidelines.”

The Portland Tribune

Homeless Helpers Brace for Long Winter

*By Nick Budnick
February 14, 2019*

Mount Scott center opens as additional shelter for first cold snap of the winter, increasing options for those in need.

Homeless people in the Portland area survived the first big spate of cold winter weather, officials say, but now the local system of shelters and other assistance is bracing for more cold and more wet.

With an even gloomier forecast looming next week, homeless services workers are resigning themselves to the fact that the relatively temperate weather of earlier in the winter is over.

The city of Portland and Multnomah County work together to provide severe weather shelter beds at three locations: Bud Clark Commons (650 N.W. Irving, in Portland), Imago Dei (1302 S.E. Ankeny, in Portland) and Sunrise Center (18901 E. Burnside, in Gresham).

When those hit overflow conditions of needing more than 325 beds, officials open up Mount Scott Community Center (5530 S.E. 72nd Ave. in Portland) for another 88 beds.

And the system worked well last week, with shelter and outreach workers geared up and ready for the first blast of cold, according to local nonprofit officials.

"What I've heard from the joint staff who were doing severe weather outreach this weekend was that things went well," Quinn Colling of the Portland nonprofit JOIN said on Monday.

"There was a large amount of coordination that happened last week making sure agencies had the gear to get out to folks, that agencies had enough people letting (homeless) people know the shelters were open."

Homeless services workers also received a big boost from the public. The county encouraged people to buy and donate cold-weather gear, including from a list on Amazon, and donations rose last week and peaked on Monday, when JOIN received four truckloads of donations.

Each truck included 50 to 100 packages, most of them with multiple items, said Sophie Jaggi, JOIN's development director. "We received about 200 sleeping bags, 200 or so tarps, gloves, hats, protein bars, hot handwarmers and footwarmers — so yeah, just really the essential cold-weather needs."

"The reality is donations make a big difference and help stretch the funding out," said Denis Theriault, communications coordinator for the city-county homeless services office. "People have really come through."

The number of people using publicly funded shelters steadily climbed last week from about 100 earlier in the week to more than 340 on the night of Saturday, Feb. 9, according to Theriault.

That night, following snow that hit the region Friday and early Saturday, officials opened the Mount Scott Community Center as a shelter for the first time.

More cold weather ahead

Forecasts call for rain and cold weather to continue, and snow to return to the area on Sunday. Snow showers and sub-freezing temperatures are expected to hit repeatedly next week.

"Up until this week it didn't feel like the worst of winter," Theriault said Monday.

He said the goal is to keep the severe weather beds open because homeless people eventually will give up on camping outside.

The more the weather goes on like this, "the more people wear out and come in. Because at some point they just can't tough it out any more than they have been."

Colling agreed, saying that for the short term, the system appears to be fulfilling people's needs. But at some point the rain ends up being inescapable.

"We might end up needing more gear if this thing continues to be this bad," he said. "Even though we're getting people tarps and dry gear, it's hard with all the rain to make sure that people's stuff stays dry. And it takes people's stuff a while to dry out in these conditions."

The city-county office is encouraging people to go to 211info.org/donations to see how they can help.

Sources: City Club Report Generates Buzz About Governance

*By Jim Redden
February 14, 2019*

Plus, online donations may pay off for Merkley and livability ratings fall in poll.

The City Club of Portland orchestrated a media blitz for its new report that says the city should change its form of government, including electing commissioners by geographic districts.

The longtime civic organization emailed an embargoed copy of the report to journalists on Jan. 28, two weeks before its formal Feb. 10 release. No media outlet revealed what the report said, but KOIN 6 News reported that it was coming in a lengthy preview story based on it, titled "The City That Doesn't Work" on Feb. 7.

KOIN did a story on the report when it was released. So did The Oregonian, which also ran an op-ed by three of the report's authors headlined "Portland's form of government must change" on Feb. 10. Oregon Public Broadcasting ran and posted a story on the report that day. And the Portland Tribune also posted a story on the report on Feb. 10, and published a shorter version of it and an op-ed from one of the authors in its Feb. 12 issue, just ahead of a City Club forum on the report that evening.

The City Club membership vote on the report runs until Feb. 24.

Merkley's online donations may pay off

Oregon U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley got some good news Sunday as he considers running for president in 2020 — The New York Times reported he has collected the seventh-most donations through ActBlue, a Democratic fundraising platform, of all the potential Democratic candidates so far.

According to the story, Merkley has attracted 105,000 online donors. That is well below the 2.1 million who have given to Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, the No. 1 beneficiary. But it is still a respectable showing compared to the other 10 potential candidates listed in the story, which includes former U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Julian Castro with only 896 donors.

The ranking is important because the Democratic National Committee will consider the ability to collect small donations when deciding who will participate in its 2020 presidential debates, which are scheduled to start this June.

Livability ratings fall in poll

Voters think the quality of life is declining in the region, after believing it was improving just a few years ago, according to an annual poll released by the Portland Business Alliance last week.

The most recent of a series of polls by DHM Research found 50 percent of voters think the region is moving in the "right direction," a five-point drop from last year. The percentage of those thinking the region is on the "wrong track" increased six points, from 26 percent to 32 percent, according to the poll. Voters thought things were getting better between 2014 and 2017.

According to the poll, problems weighing on the minds of voters include homelessness, the lack of affordable housing, and increasing traffic congestion.

Council Votes to Withdraw From Terrorism Task Force

*By Nick Budnick
February 13, 2019*

Concerns about FBI tactics and transparency leads to 3-2 vote to leave JTTF for the second time in 18 years.

Portland's City Council on Wednesday voted to pull out of the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force, reflecting a new balance of power since the November election.

By a 3-2 vote, the council agreed Feb. 13 with concerns about civil rights expressed by more than 50 groups that had signed onto a letter expressing support of the move. Mayor Ted Wheeler and Commissioner Nick Fish opposed the withdrawal, citing safety concerns.

Read the competing city resolutions [here](#) and [here](#).

The move by Portland means that two Portland police officers will no longer participate in the task force. The city's move follows the lead of San Francisco, which pulled out of its JTTF in 2017.

Renn Cannon, special agent in charge of the FBI in Oregon, said in a statement after the council vote that the FBI would continue to partner with "other members of the JTTF as well as informally with cities and counties across the state to share information and address threats as appropriate."

"I want the people of Oregon to know that the men and women of the FBI do their work with the utmost respect for and adherence to our shared Constitutional protections that allow us to speak, gather and worship freely no matter who we are or where we come from," Cannon said.

Out in 2005, back in 2015

Portland's task force was formed by the FBI in 2000 and included the Drug Enforcement Administration, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the U.S. Postal Service, the U.S. Marshals Service and several state and local law enforcement agencies. It is similar to more than 100 other joint task forces around the country, which deal mainly with terrorist threats and regional crime issues.

Portland Police Bureau had been a part of the task force since the beginning. The city withdrew from the task force in 2005 and rejoined in 2015. In 2017, activists gathered on the steps of City Hall to formally launch their call for the city to again withdraw from the task force.

Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty won office last November while making no secret of her belief that the city should withdraw from the task force. She has argued that the federal arrest and subsequent conviction of Mohammed Mohammad over his attempt to trigger a supposed car bomb at the 2010 Pioneer Courthouse Square Christmas Tree lighting ceremony amounted to entrapment by FBI agents.

"This is not a new issue for communities," Hardesty said as she cast her vote. She cited federal officials' "disregard for state law" when it comes to Oregon's sanctuary law that prohibits law enforcement from cooperating with immigration enforcement. During her campaign, she said,

"Everywhere I went people were concerned that their data was being collected and used in ways that were against Oregon law."

Dozens of people rallied outside Portland's City Hall before the Wednesday afternoon hearing, calling on the council to leave the federal task force.

Hardesty led the rally ahead of a council vote on her plan to withdraw from the task force.

Hardesty said the task force's work was counter to Portland's sanctuary city status for immigrants. Opponents of the task force say it frequently targets immigrants, people of color and Muslims.

Commissioner Amanda Fritz also voted in favor of withdrawal, saying the FBI had not kept its promises to be transparent and regularly report to the city that were made when Portland rejoined the task force. "Those reports were ludicrous" in how little information they had, she said.

She noted that FBI directives allow surveillance that is prohibited by Oregon law and said she's unconvinced that the agency sufficiently monitors domestic threats such as white supremacist extremists. Fritz said the city had "already tried" rejoining the task force in the hopes that it would be more transparent. "It did not work ... Trust cannot be earned by saying, 'You can trust me.' "

Commissioner Chloe Eudaly had been considered the swing vote on the task force resolutions. She said the testimony at council eased some of her concerns about pulling out of the task force. "I do not trust the system that JTTF functions within. I do not trust the administration that oversees it.... Do you feel safer today than you did five years ago? I don't."

'It's a mistake'

Commissioner Nick Fish voted against the withdrawal, calling the debate "unfortunately rushed." He stressed his past votes on white nationalism and his concerns about the Trump administration.

Fish said that Portland remains threatened by terrorism, and said, "My confidential briefings from federal law enforcement have reinforced this sobering reality."

Fish had floated a counterproposal that would have called for explicit safeguards for civil liberties and kept the city in the terrorism task force, which he said would set a "national standard" for such task forces. And he had prepared further amendments to strengthen his counter-proposal.

But when Wheeler invited him to weigh in after public testimony concluded, Fish begged off to let other commissioners cast their votes — perhaps suggesting he knew the vote would go against him.

Wheeler called the vote unsurprising and said he respected the majority's vote. "I personally do not believe that the case to withdraw from the JTTF has been adequately made.... I still believe it's a mistake."

Early in Wednesday's hearing, Wheeler argued that the task force would be most transparent if the city of Portland is engaged in it, saying that to withdraw would be asking the city to trust the FBI to share all relevant information with the city — when those calling for withdrawal did not trust the FBI.

Portland Police Bureau Assistant Chief Jami Resch agreed with his assessment, saying, "to us it becomes less transparent."

But Kimberly McCullough of the ACLU of Oregon disagreed with Wheeler's argument. "The idea that our officers working for the JTTF is going to somehow transform a massively long history of rights violations by the FBI and by various JTTFs around the country, it's dubious to us."

Willamette Week

Portland Leaves the Joint Terrorism Task Force Again, Becoming Second U.S. City to Cut Ties

By Katie Shepherd

February 13, 2019

The move makes Portland the second city to cut ties with an FBI task force, after San Francisco left its JTTF in 2017.

Portland city council voted to withdraw from the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force.

The move makes Portland the second city to cut ties with an FBI task force, after San Francisco left its JTTF in 2017. Portland had rejoined the JTTF in 2015.

Commissioner Chloe Eudaly voted with Commissioners Jo Ann Hardesty and Amanda Fritz to pull Portland police officers out of the JTTF, which investigates potential extremist threats.

Commissioner Nick Fish opposed Hardesty's resolution to pull out of the task force. They had proposed making changes to the memorandum that guided the partnership between local police and federal law enforcement agencies.

Eudaly had not publicly indicated her vote before Wednesday's City Council meeting.

"I believe we all want the same thing, we want to keep our communities safe," Eudaly said. "We want to direct our resources toward actual threats."

Before voting in favor of withdraw, Eudaly said she did not trust the federal administration or feel safer now than five years ago.

Hardesty had led the push to withdraw from the JTTF since winning election in November.

"When we talk about one Portland, a Portland where everyone is respected, we cannot in good conscious continue our participation with the JTTF," Hardesty said.

Wheeler and Fish voiced concerns that pulling out of the task force would put the city at a disadvantage because police would not have access to information on extremist threats.

"Doesn't that mean we're missing the opportunity to assist with priorities and bringing our city's values to the table?" Wheeler asked during the deliberation.

Opponents of the JTTF partnership presented examples of the FBI investigating civil rights advocates and largely peaceful left-leaning groups as potential terrorism threats and extremists while labelling groups such as the KKK as "victims."

Mike German, a former FBI agent who is now an advocate for leaving the JTTF, pointed to terrorist attacks in Boston and Philadelphia that occurred despite those cities partnering with the FBI.

Commissioner Fritz echoed that sentiment.

"The city of Boston's participation in the JTTF did not prevent the Boston Marathon bombing," Fritz said before voting in favor of the resolution to withdraw. "The city of Portland's participation in the JTTF did not prevent the MAX stabbings."

Supporters of staying in the JTTF, including Portland Police Chief Danielle Outlaw, emphasized the benefits of the partnership for both the Portland police and the FBI. The police bureau attempted to assuage fears that a partnership with the JTTF would give federal immigration officials access to local law enforcement data.

"While values are important," Wheeler said, "values alone cannot protect the safety of the community."

Despite those assurances, City Council voted to leave the task force.

Functionally, that will remove two Portland Police officers from the task force. Those positions were funded through federal grants that the bureau will no longer receive, but the total funds were a negligible portion of the PPB budget.

The Portland Mercury

What's at Stake if Portland Remains in—or Leaves—the FBI's Terrorism Task Force?

*By Alex Zielinski
February 13, 2019*

Millie was 10 years old when a swarm of heavily armed cops burst through her family's front door in the middle of the night. Her father, who had opened the door at 3 am to officers who suspected there had been a burglary at their SW Portland home, was immediately arrested. Officers corralled Millie, her mother, and five younger siblings in the kitchen, raided the house for electronics, and then drove them to a facility where FBI agents interrogated each child about a recent family trip to Yemen.

"I was terrified," said Millie, who asked that the Mercury only use her first name. "I didn't know what was going on."

She wouldn't see her father, a prominent leader in Portland's Muslim community, for nearly two years. According to Millie's recollection—supported by federal court documents—the inconsistent felony charges against him were eventually found to be unsubstantiated. In 2011, Millie's father's case was dismissed.

But the trauma endured from the experience never went away.

After her father's arrest, Millie dropped out of school to take care of her siblings as her mother struggled with severe PTSD from the night of the arrest. Their household was shunned by their close-knit Muslim community, mostly out of fear that any interaction with the family would put them on the FBI's radar. Even now, nearly a decade since the arrest, Millie's parents still live in general seclusion.

"The intended goal of knocking him down," Millie says, "was successful."

Millie, who now volunteers with immigrant rights group Unite Oregon, later learned that the investigation was led by a FBI team called the Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF), a regional

group made up of law enforcement representatives from multiple jurisdictions who work together with the goal of investigating suspected terrorist activity.

Portland's JTTF includes more than a dozen members, including agents and officers from the FBI, Homeland Security, Customs and Border Protection, Oregon State Police, Port of Portland, and Clackamas and Washington Counties, as well as two officers with the Portland Police Bureau (PPB).

Portland City Council is scheduled to vote Wednesday afternoon on whether the PPB should leave the JTTF—a request made by the council's newest member, Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty, who campaigned on the promise of removing Portland police from the JTTF.

This is the third time the city has considered leaving or no longer participating in the JTTF since Portland initially joined the controversial task force in 1997.

"On the campaign trail, what I heard over and over again from people was their sense of insecurity just walking around Portland," Hardesty said at a January community meeting about the task force. "I feel very uneasy having city employees that are working for a federal government that has shown that it's targeted immigrants and refugees."

Pulling Portland police from the task force will not stop the JTTF from staging the kind of targeted raids that Millie's family experienced—but it will guarantee that no Portland cops are involved.

According to civil rights advocates, such a move help Portland communities that have been targeted by the FBI regain their trust in the PPB. Meanwhile, law enforcement officials argue that withdrawing from the organization could slow down the FBI's response to local terrorism threats.

City commissioners remain divided on the vote. Mayor Ted Wheeler and Commissioner Nick Fish are both strong advocates for remaining in the task force, while Commissioners Amanda Fritz and Hardesty are expected to vote against the JTTF partnership. That leaves Commissioner Chloe Eudaly—who hasn't expressed her stance—as the swing vote in this afternoon's meeting.

"The big issue I'm having with this conversation... is that there's no acknowledgment of the many ways in which other units or task forces have violated individuals' civil rights," Eudaly said at a Tuesday morning work session at City Hall, where civil rights advocates and representatives from federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies made their cases in support of or opposition to the JTTF.

Eudaly noted she was a member of a group in the 1990s that had been illegally surveilled by the PPB, and is familiar with other cases in which the FBI did the same to left-leaning activist organizations.

"How do we justify the risk of civil and human rights violations by our continued involvement in JTTF?" Eudaly asked the group.

"[We] recognize mistakes have occurred," said Billy Williams, US Attorney for Oregon.

"Groups advocating for review and policy changes are so critical for us being better at what we do."

Eudaly also asked how the feds are using their resources to address white nationalism, an issue that was further pursued by Mayor Ted Wheeler. In a pointed question to the two PPB officers who sit on the JTTF—who participated in the work session via speakerphone, to protect their identities—Wheeler asked, "Is it fair to say that the increase in violent extremism by white nationalists that we see in the news reflects the types of cases that you routinely investigate?"

The officers, named Matt and Brian, answered in unison: “Yes.”

Another concern brought up in past city talks regarding the JTTF is the opaque nature of the PPB’s work on the task force. PPB Chief Danielle Outlaw will only be informed about what work her JTTF officers are involved in if those officers—or the FBI—decide she needs to know. The same goes for Wheeler.

According to Renn Cannon, the special agent in charge of the Portland Division of the FBI, such alerts happen “frequently.” Outlaw is currently in the process of obtaining the necessary federal security clearance needed to have greater access to JTTF information. Wheeler is not, Cannon noted.

“We normally don’t do this for political figures,” Cannon told the Mercury last week.

Civil rights advocates, including the ACLU and Unite Oregon, have also raised serious concerns that the PPB’s involvement in the JTTF violates local and state laws that bar law enforcement from collaborating with federal immigration enforcement. Cannon confirmed that US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) does not sit on the JTTF, but that members of Homeland Security and Customs and Border Protection do.

“We don’t do investigations because of somebody’s immigration status,” Cannon told the Mercury. However, in a recent op-ed published in the Oregonian, Cannon wrote, “We only use immigration violations when there are no other options to disrupt crimes or violence.”

When asked in the work session if they have been assigned to work on immigration cases, both of the PPB’s JTTF officers said no.

“I wouldn’t do it, and we haven’t been asked to do it,” Brian added. Both officers also affirmed that their work on the JTTF has never broken Oregon law.

Critics argue that the officers’ association with an FBI-led task force still sends the wrong message to Portland’s minority communities.

“FBI investigations have a damage on our community,” said Kimberly McCullough, the legislative director of the ACLU of Oregon, at the January community meeting. “They harm community trust, they chill political activity, some people are afraid to engaging in their own religious practices.”

McCullough added that the PPB’s involvement in the JTTF could keep communities from contacting local law enforcement out of fear they could be noticed by the FBI.

Millie’s history with the FBI reflects this reality. Mille says she was sexually assaulted as a teenager, after her father was released from prison. But knowing PPB’s relationship with the FBI, her parents kept her from reporting it to the Portland police.

“It makes people feel a lot safer when we can trust the police,” she said.

The FBI’s top argument for PPB remaining in the JTTF is safety: Having two officers who have security clearance with the FBI allows law enforcement to work more swiftly in the event of a terrorist attack, according to Cannon, who calls the JTTF a “safety net.”

“Anytime you cut a line in that net, you create a potential hole,” Cannon told the Mercury. “Our investigation is going to be slowed down by not having access to information. It’s not the most effective way of doing things.”

Jessica Anderson, the supervisor for the international terrorism unit of the Portland Division of the FBI, said that PPB officers also help the FBI connect suspects with local social services.

“We are much more successful at connecting suspects to mental health or drug treatment services when we have the participation of local officers,” Anderson said at the Tuesday work session.

Even if the PPB leaves the JTTF, Cannon told the Mercury, “the sky’s not going to fall.” He adds that FBI will still work closely with the PPB when there’s any hint of a domestic terror threat.

“Will it become a bit harder? Yes. Are we less safe? Yes, but it’s a small difference,” Cannon said. “I can say it’s a fact the teamwork will not be as robust [and] it may create some inefficiencies. But there is still a safety net, there are still plenty of people working in the JTTF.”

Portland City Council will vote on the city’s involvement with the JTTF at 2 pm.

City Council Votes to Remove Portland Police From FBI Task Force

*By Alex Zielinski
February 13, 2019*

Portland City Council has voted to withdraw Portland police representatives from the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF), a cross-jurisdictional group of regional law enforcement officials who collaborate on domestic terrorist cases.

This decision, which followed three hours of public testimony, means that the two Portland police officers who currently sit on the controversial task force must cede their involvement within 90 days. It's a move that the FBI, Portland Police Bureau (PPB) Chief Danielle Outlaw, and Mayor Ted Wheeler strongly oppose.

Today's decision hinged on the swing vote of Commissioner Chloe Eudaly, the only commissioner who hadn't made her stance public before the 2 pm meeting.

Before casting her vote, Eudaly said she wished the council had been given more time to reach consensus as a body. "However, the testimony I heard today has gone a long way toward easing my concerns," Eudaly said.

The vast majority of public testimony came from community members who urged the council to leave the JTTF, citing concerns of secret investigations between PPB and the FBI, and pointing to the FBI's history of targeting people based on their religion, race, or political beliefs.

"Sometimes we have to make decisions in a flawed system that satisfy no one, and sometimes we get to challenge and change the system," Eudaly said. "And this is one of those times."

The audience erupted in applause and cheers after she affirmed her support to withdraw. Portland joins San Francisco in being the only cities who've withdrawn their police from a JTTF.

Wheeler and Commissioner Fish voted to remain in the task force, both arguing that having "Portland values" at the table during JTTF conversations is far better than not being able to give input to FBI investigations.

"In short, we are ceding these opportunities by walking away, rather than remaining aggressively engaged," said Wheeler. "We're here today with real challenges, and we need the tools to face them. Ending this partnership gives us fewer tools in a much more dangerous world."

Wheeler said the vote was the least surprising outcome of any city council session he's attended since entering the mayor's office. He said the discussion has been less about policy, and more about a lack of trust in law enforcement—specifically at the federal level.

"But, if we believe the JTTF is not accountable enough, then it's our job to be stewards of this partnership and make it better over time," Wheeler said, in closing. "It is not to respond by doing away with it entirely because of what could be taking place as opposed to what is actually taking place."

Some officials suggested that the vote had been rushed by Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty, whose 2018 campaign centered on pulling PPB from the JTTF immediately.

"I reject the notion that this vote is somehow rushed," Hardesty said this afternoon, noting that community groups have been working for over a decade to keep the city from working with FBI agents. Today's vote is the third time the Portland City Council has held a vote on its involvement in the JTTF.

Hardesty, Commissioner Amanda Fritz, and Eudaly all express concerns about the FBI's recorded leniency toward white nationalist groups.

"Members of white supremacist groups are responsible for the vast majority of extremist-related fatalities in the past year, yet they don't appear to be the focus of the FBI or the JTTF," Eudaly said.

"I continue to believe that we are safest when communities are connected to each other and their government," Eudaly went on. "Both the perception and actual activities of the JTTF undermines their trust, and therefore, cannot make us safe. Today we take another step in the direction of the greater good."

OPB

Portland Withdraws From Federal Joint Terrorism Task Force, Again

*By Amelia Templeton
February 13, 2019*

Portland is out of the FBI-led Joint Terrorism Task Force again.

The Portland City Council voted 3-2 Wednesday to withdraw the city's police officers from the JTTF, a partnership between federal agencies and local law enforcement.

Commissioners Jo Ann Hardesty, Amanda Fritz and Chloe Eudaly supported the change. They worry there is not enough civilian oversight to ensure Portland officers abide by civil rights laws and say there isn't enough evidence to show the task force has made Portland safer.

"The current president has made clear his animosity toward Muslims, immigrants and people of color," Fritz said, noting that the FBI has not followed through on promises to provide more, regular information on the group's work since Portland re-entered the partnership several years ago. "I found it hard to trust the JTTF under President Obama. It's impossible now."

The vote is a significant win for Hardesty, the newest city commissioner who ran last year on a promise to get Portland out of the federal task force.

“For a whole year, I talked about this on the campaign trail, and everywhere I went, people were concerned about whether or not their data was collected and used in a way that was against Oregon state law,” she said. “We are here today because I am about keeping promises.”

Hardesty and Fritz had made their positions clear before Wednesday’s meeting. Eudaly ended up being the deciding vote and said she does not have confidence city leaders have enough oversight to prevent Portland officers from engaging in police work that targets immigrants and other groups.

“Even good people can make bad decisions, especially in a flawed system,” she said. “I don’t trust the system the JTTF functions within. I do not trust the administration who oversees it. ... Do you feel safer today than you did five years ago? I don’t either.”

Mayor Ted Wheeler and Commissioner Nick Fish voted against leaving the terrorism task force. Wheeler said he respected his colleagues’ decision and reasoning — but disagreed.

“I absolutely believe that the JTTF is highly imperfect. It could do much better,” he said. “As the police commissioner, I cannot support a policy that appears to favor politics or ideology over the safety and wellbeing of Portlanders. While values are extremely important, values alone cannot protect the safety of the community.”

Fish asked his colleagues to slow down and consider tweaks to, rather than a wholesale rejection of, Portland’s relationship with the FBI-led group. They declined.

“The FBI will continue doing this work without our involvement,” Fish said. “I’d rather have our values at the table. Why would we walk away and forfeit our opportunity for oversight of their work?”

Portland is the second West Coast city to withdraw from the task force since President Trump took office. San Francisco withdrew its officers from the group in 2017. The city withdrew once before, under Mayor Tom Potter, entered into a convoluted “as needed” relation under Mayor Sam Adams and then rejoined in full under Mayor Charlie Hales in 2015.

The city’s resolution does not end the task force’s work or its partnerships with six other local law enforcement agencies that are part of the JTTF.

During the debate, federal officials stressed that they will continue to work with Portland officers when needed. But city officers will cease their participation within 90 days.

“The FBI’s mission is to protect the American people and uphold the Constitution. With the withdrawal of the city of Portland from the Joint Terrorism Task Force, that mission doesn’t change,” Renn Cannon, the FBI’s special agent in charge for Oregon, said in a written statement. “... To this end, the FBI will continue to partner formally with other members of the JTTF as well as informally with cities and counties across the state to share information and address threats as appropriate.”

Portland’s vibrant left-wing activist community turned out in force at Wednesday’s meeting to show its support for withdrawal. The council chamber was standing-room only with an overflow room filled as well.

Public testimony was overwhelmingly in favor of withdrawal. Of the more than 30 people who spoke, all but two urged the council to pull the city’s two police officers from the JTTF.

The people who spoke largely repeated familiar arguments regarding the task force, noting the FBI’s history of surveillance of left-wing activists and condemning the federal government’s zero-tolerance immigration enforcement policy and practice of separating families.

Millie Hobaish, the daughter of a Yemeni immigrant, told the council she is a firsthand witness to the mistreatment of Muslims and immigrants by the Joint Terrorism Task Force in Portland: “My family’s home was raided when I was 10 years old after several years of very heavy surveillance,” Hobaish told city leaders. “My father was detained on charges that he was not allowed to know for the first portion of the trial.”

Hobaish said a judge eventually found the charges against her father unsubstantiated and threw them out.

Court records reviewed by OPB confirm a key part of Hobaish’s account: A judge dismissed the charges against her father with prejudice after prosecutors requested the case be dropped.

“By that time the raid had already destroyed my family,” she told the council. “My father was left chronically underemployed and unable to find skilled labor. My mother was permanently traumatized.”

Hobaish said she left school at 10 as a result of the raid and earned her high school diploma years later at a community college.

“It has sowed a complete distrust between the Muslim community and the city of Portland,” she said. “With that, I urge that you guys vote against remaining in the JTTF.”

Editor’s note: An earlier version of this story misstated the deadline for Portland’s police officers to withdraw from the JTTF following the council’s vote.