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A federally-subsidized crackdown on antiwar protests

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Situation

Fully aware of the increasingly [violent crackdowns](#) on students and teachers protesting his enabling of Israel's genocide against Palestinians, Biden greenlit an even harsher police response this week. On Tuesday, Biden [smeared](#) the campus protests as antisemitic, violent, and unlawful. For university administrators on the fence about escalating the use of force against their own students and faculty, Biden's comments could have only nudged them one way.

The number and intensity of police crackdowns appears to have [escalated](#) dramatically after Biden's comments. Later on Tuesday, riot police stormed [dozens](#) of schools across the country, including at Columbia University. Here's [Adam Tooze](#):

There was no riot last night at Columbia any more than there has been at any other point. The violence came from the police side and it came at the invitation and

request of the University administration.

Police aren't there to ensure public safety. Look at the [video footage](#) from Dartmouth, for example. Or consider what happened at UCLA: On Tuesday, university officials [declared](#) the student protests as unlawful. Tuesday night, police officers in riot gear [stood by](#) for at least an hour as a mob attacked the antiwar protesters, [injuring](#) more than 100 of them. This morning, riot police stormed the protesters' encampment and [arrested](#) over 200 people.

Yesterday, Trump [praised](#) the police crackdowns at a campaign rally. Today, Biden [again](#) slandered the protests as violent and unlawful. Bipartisanship is back.

Greenlighting violence through budgets

Biden had already given police the greenlight to behave violently through his budgets. The 2020 protests against police brutality were met with [rampant police brutality](#), but after entering office in 2021, Biden dramatically scaled up federal subsidies to police through regular appropriations legislation (for fiscal years 2022 through 2024), and the [Bipartisan Safer Communities Act](#). The chart below visualizes this surge in federal subsidies to police.

Biden supported all these bills and signed them into law, but some people will still tell me that the chart title should attribute blame to Congress and not Biden, and that I should Learn How Government Works. Please know that I'm fully aware that Biden didn't enact federal subsidies for police unilaterally. If he had, the numbers would be much higher.

Congress constantly reins Biden in when it comes to funding the police. It's apparent when you compare the amount requested versus enacted for Department of Justice (DOJ) and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) police grants.

For example, Biden requested \$601 million for the [State Homeland Security Grant Program](#) for FY2024, but Congress [enacted](#) \$468 million, shaving \$133 million off Biden's proposal. For the [Urban Area Security Initiative](#), Congress shaved \$158 million off Biden's \$711 million request.

These two DHS programs have a record of contributing to [militarized](#) police responses to protests, [expanding](#) surveillance and targeting of protesters, and being totally [useless](#) at preventing terrorist attacks.¹ They incentivize police to treat [protests](#) as an inherent danger; a hotbed for domestic extremism that [involves](#) "driving lawful protests to incite violence."² They [fund](#) "[fusion centers](#)" which are joint federal and state/local police operations invented after 9/11 for counterterrorism purposes, but in reality, they [focus](#) disproportionately on protests and domestic movements.³ Ultimately, these grants reinforce the practice of police violently cracking down on protests under the (often unfounded) suspicion that they may turn violent or damage public property.

¹ A Senate investigation in 2012 [found](#) that fusion centers had "yielded little, if any, benefit to federal counterterrorism intelligence efforts."

² So what's Biden *also* saying when he claims that the antiwar protests are violent?

³ One fusion center report depicted routine advocacy by Muslim civil rights groups as support for terrorism. A fusion center in Chicago sent DHS and FBI false information about people who appeared to be "Arabic" or "Middle Eastern." A Boston-area fusion center targeted activists by scanning social media posts with #BlackLivesMatter and #MuslimLivesMatter and [commonplace Arabic words](#). Other centers have targeted abortion and environmental activists.

[Source: Speaking Security newsletter](#)

