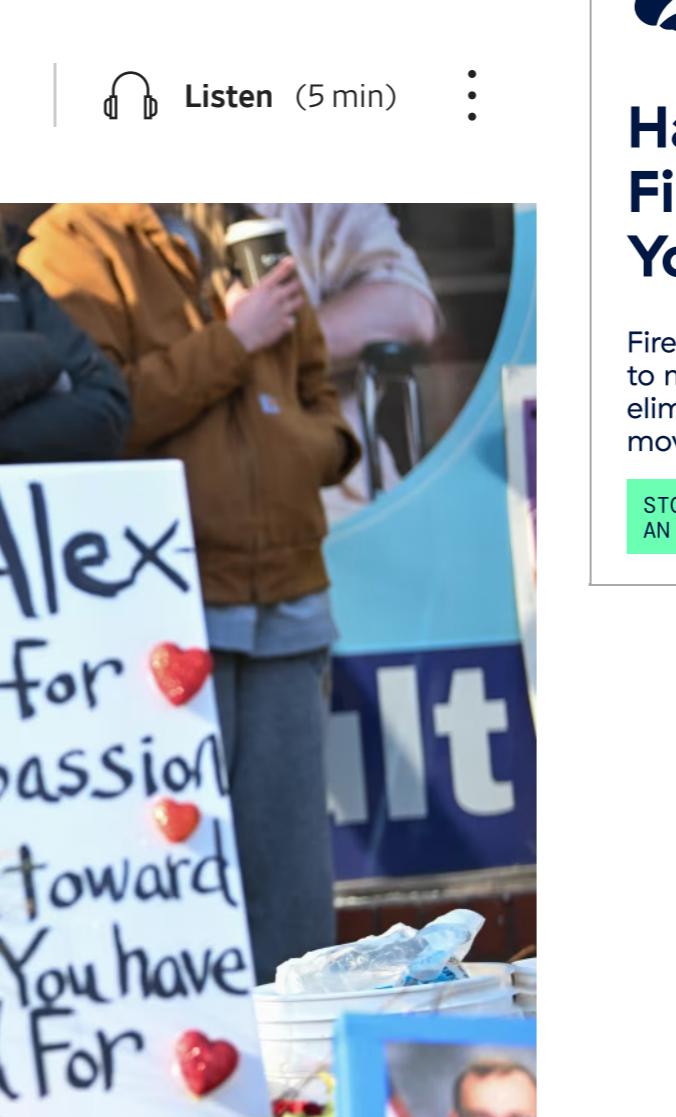


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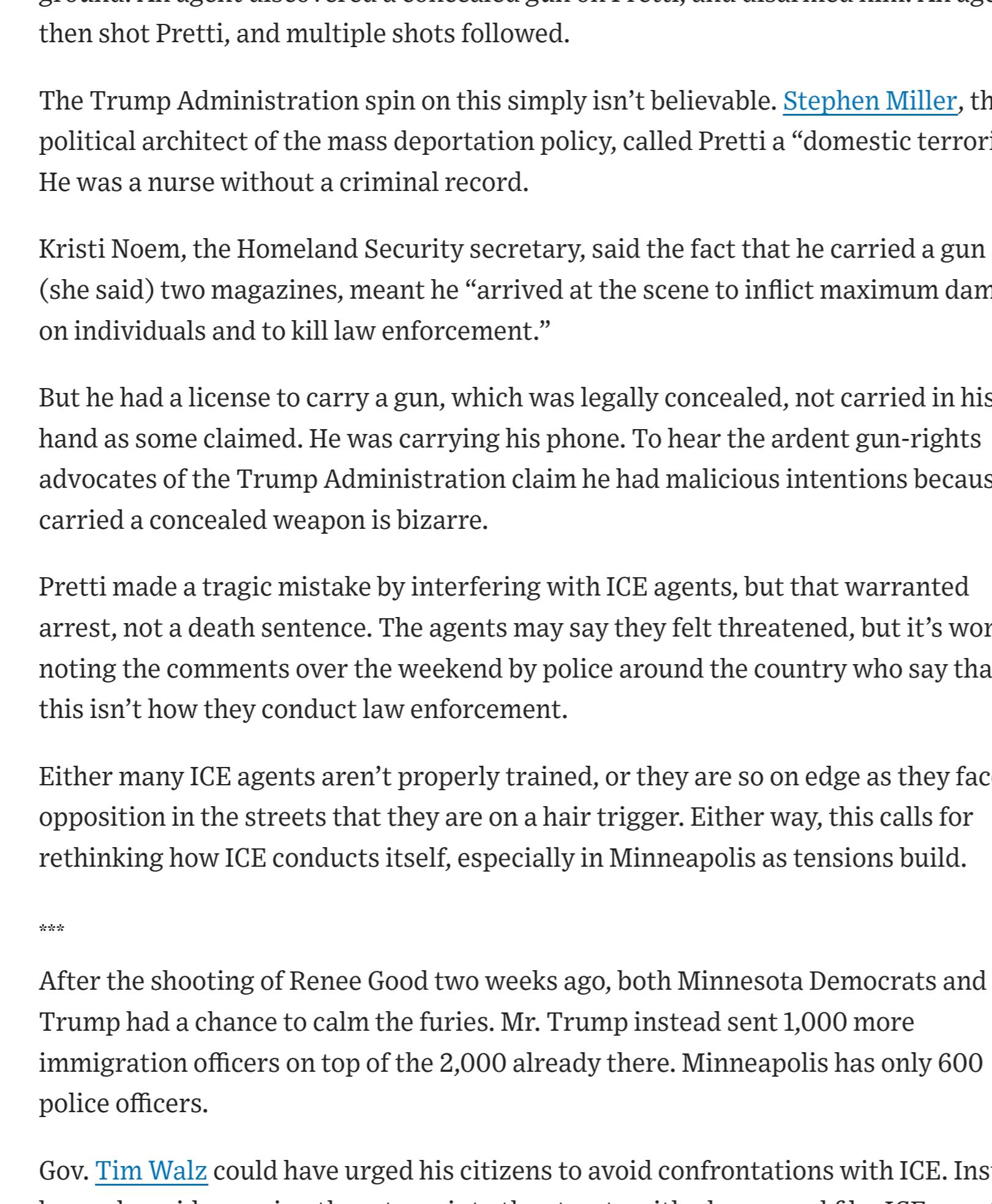
Alex Prett made a mistake, but he wasn't a 'domestic terrorist.'

By The Editorial Board [Follow](#)

Jan. 25, 2026 at 4:42 pm ET

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A makeshift memorial for Alex Prett in Minneapolis on Sunday. CRAIG LASSIG/EPA/SHUTTERSTOCK

When Donald Trump visited the Journal in October 2024, he was asked how he'd implement his mass deportation policy to avoid appearing to be cruel and inviting a political backlash.

His answer was surprisingly nuanced. He said he had to deport illegal migrants because "we can't handle these people coming in right now. But the interest from the heart, yeah, something's got to be done. I'm not going to do that [separate families]. I can't do that. Okay, thank you. Really good question. I mean, there's some human questions that get in the way of being perfect, and we have to have the heart, too. Okay?"

Fifteen months later in Minneapolis, there isn't much heart in Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The Saturday shooting of Alex Prett, as he lay on the ground surrounded by ICE agents, is the worst incident to date in what is becoming a moral and political debacle for the Trump Presidency.

Videos of an event aren't always definitive, but this is how it looks to us. Prett attempted, foolishly, to assist a woman who had been pepper-sprayed by agents. Multiple agents then tackled Prett, and he had a phone in one hand as he lay on the ground. An agent discovered a concealed gun on Prett, and disarmed him. An agent then shot Prett, and multiple shots followed.

The Trump Administration spin on this simply isn't believable. [Stephen Miller](#), the political architect of the mass deportation policy, called Prett a "domestic terrorist." He was a nurse without a criminal record.

Kristi Noem, the Homeland Security secretary, said the fact that he carried a gun and (she said) two magazines, meant he "arrived at the scene to inflict maximum damage on individuals and to kill law enforcement."

But he had a license to carry a gun, which was legally concealed, not carried in his hand as some claimed. He was carrying his phone. To hear the ardent gun-rights advocates of the Trump Administration claim he had malicious intentions because he carried a concealed weapon is bizarre.

Prett made a tragic mistake by interfering with ICE agents, but that warranted arrest, not a death sentence. The agents may say they felt threatened, but it's worth noting the comments over the weekend by police around the country who say that this isn't how they conduct law enforcement.

Either many ICE agents aren't properly trained, or they are so on edge as they face opposition in the streets that they are on a hair trigger. Either way, this calls for rethinking how ICE conducts itself, especially in Minneapolis as tensions build.

After the shooting of Renee Good two weeks ago, both Minnesota Democrats and Mr. Trump had a chance to calm the furries. Mr. Trump instead sent 1,000 more immigration officers on top of the 2,000 already there. Minneapolis has only 600 police officers.

Gov. [Tim Walz](#) could have urged his citizens to avoid confrontations with ICE. Instead he made a video urging them to go into the streets with phones and film ICE agents, whether or not they are performing lawful searches under federal immigration law. His rhetoric is incendiary and describes ICE as a lawless terrorist operation. Another tragedy was inevitable, and there will be more if this continues.

Whether he likes it or not, most of the burden now lies with Mr. Trump as the President who controls ICE. He would be wise to pause ICE enforcement in the Twin Cities to ease tensions and consider a less provocative strategy. Yes, many on the left would conclude that their civil disobedience has paid off. But Mr. Trump can still pursue enforcement with a smaller force and a strategy aimed at criminals, not at hotel maids and gardeners.

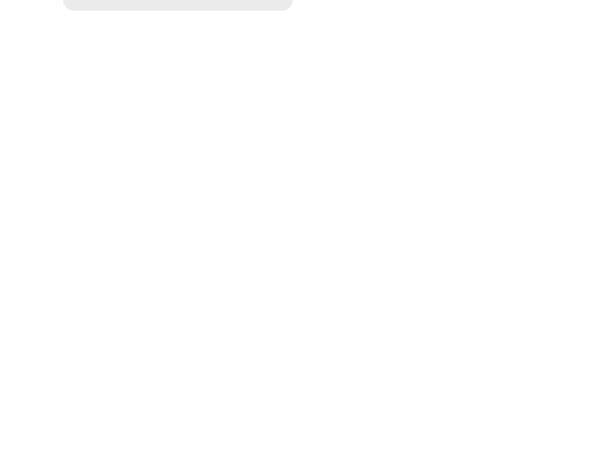
Mr. Trump and his advisers could also help themselves, and the country, by explaining what they are trying to do and sounding conciliatory. Ms. Noem and Mr. Miller aren't credible spokesmen. Their social-media and cable-TV strategy is to own the libs, rather than to persuade Americans.

This is backfiring against Republicans. The violence in Minneapolis has erased the state's welfare fraud from the headlines, which no doubt pleases Mr. Walz. It's also given Democrats in Washington an excuse to shut down the government a second time over the Homeland Security funding bill.

Mr. Miller's mass deportation methods are turning immigration, an issue Mr. Trump owned in 2024, into a political liability for Republicans in 2026. Americans don't want law enforcement shooting people in the street or arresting five-year-old boys. The President who said you have to have a heart in enforcement ought to show some.

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