

CBS Mornings

01/26/26

8:04:57 a.m. [TEASE]

9 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Ahead; Deadly MN Shooting Latest]

KELLY O'GRADY: Ahead, how this deadly encounter has led to pushback from gun rights advocates. We are going to talk to former NRA spokesperson Dana Loesch about that part of the story.

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8:12:05 a.m.

7 minutes and 17 seconds

VLADIMIR DUTHIERS: The killing of Alex Pretti has raised concerns among a group of Americans not known for criticizing the Trump administration: advocates for the Second Amendment. The federal government says part of the reason he was killed is because he had a gun, but Pretti was licensed to carry, and the video shows that the weapon stayed in his waistband. One Trump administration official said online "if you approach law enforcement with a gun, there is a high likelihood they will be legally justified in shooting you." Here is the NRA's response: "Responsible public voices should be awaiting a full investigation, not making generalizations and demonizing law-abiding citizens." Joining me now to talk about this is Dana Loesch, a radio host and former spokesperson for the National Rifle Association. Dana, good to see you. Good morning.

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Fmr. NRA Spokesperson on Deadly MN Shooting]

DANA LOESCH: Good morning. Thanks for having me.

DUTHIERS: Sure. So, Alex Pretti, as you know, had a legal right to carry that weapon, but federal officials like Kristi Noem seem to question why he turned up armed at the protest. You yourself have said that you have gone to protests and you have been armed yourself. When you heard what she said –

LOESCH: Correct.

DUTHIERS: – what was your reaction to that?

LOESCH: My first thought was I feel like the administration needs to be a little careful with language and language is incredibly important. I mean, we are not nitpicking and trying to police language for some sort of gate-keeping rule. It's because certain words invoke certain statutes and certain penalties as a result of that. We have a duty to be very, very careful with

the language that we use. So, I wish that – I wish that Secretary Noem and others could be aware of that because simply approaching law enforcement with a firearm isn't indicative of ill intent, nor is it a crime. And accurately said, I have over the years, many years, have been armed at protests, both concealed carry and open carry. I have been right in the front face presence of law enforcement while open carry, but there is a difference, though, and I really want people to pay attention to this. At no point was I ever detained nor was I shot at or did I – was I involved in any kind of altercation with law enforcement because I did not insert myself into any kind of federal investigation, and that's what's really important here. There's a difference between carrying by law enforcement and there's a difference between carrying while in commission of felonious activity and according to U.S. statute, this is federal law, you cannot insert yourself or impede law enforcement operations, and I'm sure that this investigation is going to uncover a lot of questions, and we all have a lot of questions about this. We've all seen the videos. We have all seen the angles. But there is a difference – I would never carry and then impede official law enforcement investigation because then it kicks off this domino effect of potentially tragic circumstances that I think everybody wants to avoid.

DUTHIERS: Yeah, Dana, you mentioned impeding. So, we were showing the video a little earlier, and I know that in your Substack you say that you have parsed the video the way we all have, the way everybody has over the last couple of days. And the video, we'll show it, it appears – Pretti appears to be helping a woman who was pushed down and pepper sprayed by a federal agent before he himself is dragged to the ground. So, when you see that, is that the action, in your mind, of somebody who is trying to impede or disrupt an operation?

LOESCH: Well, my first thought when I saw this video is what happened in the moments leading up to this, because according to witness statements, and there is other video from a different perspective that is showing him in the road at one point directing traffic, which, you know, you don't – it's not necessarily a crime to do that, but I think this is something else that the investigation is going to will out and why I think we should exercise caution here because someone's life was at stake and I think it deserves the respect of that caution and fact gathering. So, when I watched this my first thought was what happens up to this point? It's very kind of – it's very difficult to ascertain from the video, it's very shaky, when you zoom in, it's like a Zapruder film. It's very chaotic. Lots of people talking, there's lots of noise, you've got the whistle in the background, but this is what happens with these chaotic scenes –

DUTHIERS: Yeah.

LOESCH: – which I think in no part had been unhelpfully created by some of the leaders in that state, who have not walked back their rhetoric and told people, let's not impede investigations, but let's protest, you know, on the sidewalk or nearby, but let's not impede.

DUTHIERS: Yeah, so –

LOESCH: I really think those lawmakers have that responsibility to say that. But to your question really quick, you know, when I watch this, I've got questions. Why was the need – why was there need for lethal force? I want to know what the officers thought because obviously they felt like their lives were in danger. None of us were there, right there on the ground in those matter of seconds where it happened, so that's why I think we need to let the investigation play out here.

DUTHIERS: You did say in your Substack that you could see clearly as we all see that the weapon is removed from Pretti's waistband. I want to ask you this, Dana –

LOESCH: That's what it suggests.

DUTHIERS: – exactly. The fear of government overreach has long been the historical backdrop between the discussions around the Second Amendment. When you see masked men – this is a general question for you – when you see masked men roaming our American cities, roaming our streets, asking people for papers, for citizenship papers, pulling people out of vehicles, pulling people out of their homes, that violates another amendment, the Fourth, are you worried when you see these things that are happening across American cities right now?

LOESCH: I do get worried when I – when I see high crime rates or when I see, for instance – I went over this on my radio broadcast last week, I went over the names of over 50 people that had been detained, arrested by DHS in these states where they have ignored the ICE detainers. And what really makes me nervous is the nature of the violent crimes that have been committed by those that are they are – that they are targeted for deportation who are in the country illegally –

DUTHEIRS: Right, Dana, I – everybody, I think – if –

LOESCH: – I think that needs to be made clear whether or not that's –

DUTHIERS: – if you are – if you are committing –

LOESCH: – that – that makes – that makes us all nervous.

DUTHIERS: – a crime, that's important, but –

LOESCH: Right.

DUTHIERS: – asking an American citizen for their citizenship papers, is that something that troubles you?

LOESCH: Well, I feel like that might be a hypothetical scenario. Is there something specific that you're referring to?

DUTHIERS: There have been videos that have been shared across social media of Americans being asked to show their identification papers to prove that they are American citizens, a person who was asked to show that he was an American citizen simply because he had an accent. My point isn't to sort of belabor the point that you're making about criminals being arrested. It's just to wonder, part of the backdrop around discussions around Second Amendment is this nature of what happens when an American citizen is faced with tyranny. And so, that's why I'm asking you if you think that these actions are representative of that.

LOESCH: Well, I don't know if I would classify the actions of border enforcement to be tyranny. I think that allowing people to run in the street here illegally after having committed numerous violent crimes including child predation, brutal rape, which, by the way, again, there are actually more than a handful of these individuals who have been convicted of multiple counts of these horrific charges that needs to be made public. So, I don't know if I would call enforcing that necessarily to be tyranny. However, you know, to your point and the reason we are all here today, watching what we saw in the video, I think we all have a lot of questions and I think, too – I encourage people to carry –

DUTHIERS: Dana –

LOESCH: – I encourage people to exercise their Second Amendment rights, but I also recognize that people need to be encouraged to deescalate as well and make sure that you are not impeding any kind of federal investigation.

DUTHIERS: Dana, really – really –

LOESCH: But – for the administration, they need to be careful with their words.

DUTHIERS: – yeah, that's an excellent point. I encourage also people to read your Substack. It really is interesting. Dana Loesch, thank you very much for your time. We appreciate it.

LOESCH: Thank you.

DUTHIERS: We'll be right back.

LOESCH: Appreciate it.