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A Wisconsin judge was arrested on accusations that she took extraordinary—and allegedly illegal—steps to thwart police from taking into custody a past deportee who is now accused of domestic violence.

The arrest of Judge Hannah Dugan represents a dramatic escalation of tension between some judges and President Donald Trump’s administration over the enforcement of U.S. immigration laws.

Here’s what we know so far about this rare instance of a judge being taken into custody.

What Happened

The case came to light on April 25 after FBI Director Kash Patel and Attorney General Pam Bondi each released statements confirming that Dugan had been arrested.

“No one is above the law,” Bondi said in her statement.

Brady McCarron, a spokesman for the U.S. Marshals Service, told The Epoch Times that Dugan was being investigated by the FBI before her arrest.

She was taken into custody on the grounds of the courthouse where she hears cases, the Milwaukee County Circuit Court.

Shortly after her arrest, Dugan appeared in Milwaukee’s federal court to face a count of “obstructing or impeding a proceeding before a department or agency.”

She is also accused of “concealing an individual to prevent his discovery and arrest.”

Outside the federal court, dozens of protesters rallied on behalf of the accused judge.

During the hearing, her lawyer, Craig Mastantuono, said: “Judge Dugan wholeheartedly regrets and protests her arrest. It was not made in the interest of public safety.”

When Patel announced Dugan’s arrest, he said the charges stemmed from her alleged actions in a case last week.

The FBI director said investigators believe Dugan “intentionally misdirected federal agents” away from Eduardo Flores Ruiz, as officers were preparing to arrest him in her courthouse.

Patel opined that Dugan’s alleged protection of the illegal immigrant posed “increased danger to the public.”

What Preceded the Arrest?

Additional details are contained in an affidavit filed in federal court.

In her sworn statement, FBI Special Agent Lindsay Schloemer outlined events leading to Dugan's arrest and laid out the allegations against the judge.

In mid-March, Flores Ruiz was charged with domestic violence in a case that was assigned to Dugan.

Federal authorities found that the defendant had been deported to his home country, Mexico, in 2013.

After finding no evidence that he re-entered the United States legally, an immigration official determined Flores Ruiz should be subject to removal proceedings again.

Immigration officers knew that Flores Ruiz was scheduled for a hearing in Dugan's court on April 18. A team of deportation officers and FBI agents planned to arrest Flores Ruiz afterward.

After they informed court officials about their intentions, they waited outside the courtroom, where a woman took photographs of two team members.

That woman was later identified as an attorney for the state public defender's office.

She later described these plainclothes officers to Dugan's clerk; a witness told investigators that someone announced "ICE is here."

Dugan left the bench. She and another judge, both wearing judicial robes, approached the team members.

"Witnesses uniformly reported that Dugan was visibly upset and had a confrontational, angry demeanor," the affidavit says.

The affidavit stated that Dugan "ordered" the team to go to the chief judge's office.

And, according to witnesses, Dugan allegedly "escorted" Flores Ruiz and his lawyer "out of the courtroom through the 'jury door,' which leads to a nonpublic area of the courthouse," the affidavit says.

"According to the courtroom deputy, only deputies, juries, court staff, and in-custody defendants being escorted by deputies used the back jury door. Defense attorneys and defendants who were not in custody never used the jury door," the affidavit says.

Another officer noticed Flores Ruiz and his lawyer on an elevator, and alerted members of the arrest team, which then "scrambled" to find Flores Ruiz.

They spotted him near a flagpole outside the courthouse. He then "turned around and sprinted down the street," the affidavit says. However, officers caught Flores Ruiz. They handcuffed him and detained him. That happened while two of the arrest-team members were still talking with the chief judge.

Who Is Judge Dugan?

Dugan, born in 1959, has served on the Milwaukee County Circuit Court, Branch 31, since her election in April 2016. According to election results, she secured 68 percent of the vote. She ran again in 2022 unopposed and secured a second term.

She previously worked as the executive director of Catholic Charities of Southeastern Wisconsin and also taught law courses at Seattle University and Marquette University, according to her LinkedIn profile.

Additionally, she worked for several years with nonprofit organizations that provide civil legal services, including Legal Action of Wisconsin and the Legal Aid Society of Milwaukee.

Dugan graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1981 with a Bachelor of Arts degree and earned her Juris Doctorate in 1987 from the same school.

She also received a Master of Arts in American Studies from Boston College in 1993.

On her Facebook page, Dugan posted on March 30 in support of the campaign against Judge Brad Schimel, a candidate for the Wisconsin Supreme Court who is backed by Trump.

In her post, Dugan said “Judge Schimel falls short to be elected as an independent jurist,” and said she hoped to “underscore the importance of an independent judiciary.”

Has This Happened Before?

In general, it’s apparently unusual for a judge to face charges, internet search results show. It’s even rarer for a judge to be arrested on criminal accusations.

The Epoch Times was able to find one case of a judge arrested in recent years—and that involved an allegation that a California judge had killed his wife. The former judge was convicted of second-degree murder.

In 2019, during Trump’s first term as president, the Justice Department indicted a local Massachusetts judge on charges of obstructing immigration authorities.

Authorities dropped the charges after the judge agreed to refer herself for potential judicial discipline.

Dugan’s arrest comes just after the arrest of a former New Mexico judge who is accused in a separate illegal-immigration case.

The Wisconsin judge’s arrest, however, represents the most dramatic clash between Trump’s current administration and jurists over illegal-immigrant cases.

Trump officials have continued to fight federal rulings blocking deportations of illegal immigrants, especially those accused of crime or gang affiliations.

Attorney Mike Allen, a legal analyst and former judge in Ohio, said the Dugan case “seems to fit right in line with the ongoing judicial resistance to President Trump’s attempt to deport illegal aliens.”

“Some judges seem to think they have the right to substitute their own political beliefs for what the law says. That is not what a judge is supposed to do,” Allen told The Epoch Times, adding that he didn’t have enough facts to say whether Dugan’s alleged actions can be categorized that way.

What’s Next?

Dugan’s next court appearance as a defendant is set for May 15. “The case will proceed normally like any other federal case,” Allen said. Dugan also could face disciplinary action against her law license and standing as a judge if it is found that she violated any rules of judicial conduct, he said.