

NATO protesters denounce police violence

Alexander Fangmann
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Protesters at the NATO summit in Chicago have denounced the police state methods employed to crack down on political dissent. The Chicago chapter of the National Lawyers Guild, which accused police of “indiscriminate violence,” reported at least 100 arrests and 60 cases of brutality during the two-day summit.

The largest number of arrests occurred on the first day, following a march to the intersection of Michigan Avenue and Cermak Road, approximately half a mile from the summit location at the McCormick Place convention. After ordering protesters to disperse allegedly after the expiration of their marching permit, police violently cleared the street injuring scores of protesters and arrested at least 45 individuals.

Estimates of the size of the protest vary, with some sources reporting that the organizers claimed around 5,000 people in attendance. Near the crowd at all times was a police force that was in all likelihood larger in number. A report in the *Sun-Times* from May 17 said that 3,100 Chicago Police Department (CPD) officers had been assigned to NATO duty. They were supported by a very large contingent from the Illinois State Police, many of whom wore riot gear and carried long, wooden batons. The Illinois National Guard was also reportedly put on alert.

From the beginning of the day, CPD and other law enforcement presence in the downtown area and on local transportation systems was pervasive. Homeland Security’s Federal Protective Service was a visible presence as well, with officers and SUVs parked throughout the area. At least one entire city block was full of Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) buses parked on both sides of the street, apparently for use in transporting prisoners in case of mass arrests. Anti-riot vehicles including a sound cannon were at one point brought out. Police also made extensive use of horse-mounted and bicycle-mounted officers. Even city garbage trucks were pressed into service and used as

barricades.

A steady intimidation campaign was carried out in the months preceding the summit, with the city threatening that it would pull out all the stops to prevent any significant deviation from the provisions of the protest permit, themselves the result of Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel’s curtailing of protest rights in a recently enacted ordinance. This intimidation continued throughout the last week, with the raid on the Bridgeport apartment complex and the arrest of protesters, some on trumped-up charges of terrorism.

At Sunday’s rally WSWS correspondents talked to several protesters who spoke out against the arrests and police repression. Luke Herrine, carrying a sign opposing the use of drones, was asked what he thought of the raid in Bridgeport. “It was profoundly messed up, but not surprising. Such harassment has obviously affected attendance through intimidation. It sounds like entrapment to me. The Chicago police don’t merit our trust with its history.”

Another of those in attendance, a protester named Kit, stated that the police “are arresting people on bogus charges, protesting is not terrorism,” and that “the police force has the real monopoly on violence.” When asked why he had come out to protest NATO, he said, “I didn’t vote to have them wage war in Libya.”

Allison said: “They think they can walk all over us, and are trying desperately to block people from the right to protest by trying to turn the population against organized dissent of NATO military policy.”

Both Obama and Emanuel heaped praise on Chicago police and patted themselves on the back for a job well done. Obama said, “Obviously Rahm (Emanuel) was stressed, but he performed wonderfully and the Chicago police, Chicago’s finest, did a great job under, you know, some significant pressure and a lot of scrutiny.” Emanuel claimed the police “did a tremendous job under very stressful situations over the last four days

and they make everyone of us proud of the finest police department in this country.”



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