

The Chicago frame-up: The “war on terror” comes home

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The arrest and prosecution of the five protesters accused of plotting “terrorism” during last month’s NATO summit in Chicago, Illinois is a warning to the entire working class. It marks an ominous step in the escalating use of repressive state powers built up during the “war on terror” against domestic opposition.

This week, the five men appeared in court, though prosecutors have refused to release any information on the charges against them. They have been held now for nearly a month without charges. Even the judge presiding over the case called it “strange” that the prosecution did not present an indictment, which is now expected to be released on July 2.

The hearing’s main aim appears to have been to present the accused, their hands and feet shackled, as dangerous criminals. The conditions under which they are being held, including the extraordinarily high bond of \$1.5 million for the three main accused, also contribute to presenting the case as if it were a major issue of national security.

The Illinois state attorney has indicated that the accused will be charged under state anti-terrorism statutes. These laws were passed after the attacks of September 11, 2001, along with a raft of similar legislation in other states and at the federal level. The law in Illinois is particularly sweeping in defining what constitutes “terrorism”—including, for example, any act that “causes substantial damage” to livestock and crops. As one of the attorneys of the accused put it, “You can be charged with terrorism by destroying a beehive.”

At the time of their arrest, the Illinois state attorney, Anita Alvarez, said that three of the five—Jared Chase, Brent Betterly and Brian Church—were trying to make crude Molotov cocktails to target Democratic Party institutions.

The other two men, Sebastian Senakiewicz and Mark Neiweem, face terrorism-related charges for two separate incidents. Senakiewicz allegedly bragged about possessing explosives without having any—resulting in a charge of making false bomb threats. Neiweem allegedly wrote up a list of ingredients for a pipe bomb—resulting in a charge of “attempted possession” of explosives.

What unites the three cases and all five defendants is the involvement of two undercover police informants, “Mo” and “Gloves,” who had infiltrated the Occupy Chicago organization several months before. No physical evidence has been presented or alleged to substantiate the cases. Moreover, any plans for violence appear to have been entirely instigated by the police informants.

The operation that led to the arrests was part of a broader police mobilization during the protests. Police effectively shut down Downtown Chicago for four days, arrested 100 demonstrators, and indiscriminately beat protesters.

The Obama administration’s response to the events in Chicago—including the terrorism frame-up—was to praise the police, which, Obama said, “did a great job under significant pressure and a lot of scrutiny.” In doing so, he made clear that his administration endorses the crackdown.

The resort to methods of police provocation reflects the irreconcilable conflicts tearing at American society. Anger is mounting in the working class at policies to which the two big business parties of America’s sclerotic political establishment are entirely committed: attacks on jobs and social programs, bank bailouts, and endless wars.

This same social dynamic underlies the profound erosion of American democracy in the decade during

which the “war on terror” developed, and which began with the theft of the 2000 election. Since the attacks of September 11, the ruling class, first under Bush and now Obama, has vastly expanded the powers of the state. The “war on terror” became the catch-all justification for measures creating the legal framework of a police state in the United States.

With bipartisan support, the Bush administration oversaw the passage of the Patriot Act, which expanded the spying powers of the state, the establishment of the Department of Homeland Security, and the creation of a military command overseeing the United States. It asserted an historically unprecedented expansion of executive power to torture, wage war and spy on the American population. The National Security Agency set up an illegal system to monitor US citizens’ communications.

The policies of the Obama administration have demonstrated the futility and bankruptcy of attempts to fight the move towards police rule in the United States within the confines of the two-party system

The Obama White House has opposed any attempt to investigate, let alone prosecute, its predecessor’s illegal actions, moving instead to treat the United States as one “battlefield” in a global war without any constraints in time or space. It oversaw the passage of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2012, which allows for indefinite military detention of US citizens without charges or trial.

Most recently, Obama has asserted the president’s right to assassinate US citizens without any judicial review. Attorney General Eric Holder has argued that the constitutional right to due process, a basic protection against arbitrary rule by the executive, is satisfied by the internal deliberations of the president and his closest advisors. On these grounds, anyone can be killed, or otherwise deprived of basic rights, entirely on the say-so of the president.

These events vindicate the warnings of the *World Socialist Web Site*, which explained that the main target of the anti-democratic apparatus built during the “war on terror” was the American population itself. Fearful of rising social opposition that can find expression only outside of official politics, the ruling class seeks to stamp it out with intimidation and frame-ups.



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