

Texas governor to mobilize National Guard along Mexican border

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Texas Governor Rick Perry announced yesterday that he would use his executive authority to carry out Operation Strong Safety, the activation and mobilization of some 1,000 Texas National Guard troops along the southern border of Texas. Perry is temporarily seeking the deployment of the National Guard troops until an additional 3,000 border patrol agents can be permanently hired and deployed.

Perry's justification for the deployment of troops is to stop Mexican drug cartels that are currently exploiting the crisis in connection with Central American children crossing the border. According to the Texas governor, the troops' primary goal is to support the Customs and Border Patrol agents and the Department of Public Safety (DPS) officials' efforts to stop illegal drug trafficking.

On the "Fox News Sunday" television program, Perry stated that the activation of the National Guard is important "because this flood of children is pulling away the border patrol from their normal duties of keeping bad people, keeping the drug cartels, they're being distracted, so that I would suggest is a very obvious reason that those National Guard troops should come play an important role."

The deployment of the troops comes as over 57,000 unaccompanied children, most of them from Central America, have been detained in the US in deplorable conditions after crossing the Mexican border. The vast majority of these children are fleeing gang violence from cities such as San Pedro Sula in Honduras, the world's murder capital.

The horrific conditions in their home countries have been made possible through Washington's support of coups and brutal dictatorships and austerity measures demanded by the International Monetary Fund and World Bank.

Governor Perry argues that the Obama administration has proven incapable securing the border, and that Texas officials must take matters into their own hands. In reality, there exist no fundamental differences between Obama's and Perry's immigration policies. Obama has indicated that he has no "philosophical objections" to the deployment of the National Guard or to the expanded use of drones on the border. For both the Democrats and Republicans, the only solution to this "humanitarian crisis" is a military one.

This is not the first time National Guard troops have been deployed along the border. In 2006 President George W. Bush sent 6,000 troops to California, New Mexico and Arizona. President Obama, along with the New Mexico governor at the time, Bill Richardson, deployed National Guard troops in that state in 2010.

According to an internal memo obtained by the McAllen, Texas *Monitor*, state officials have been quick to deny the reactionary role of Perry. The memo states, "This is not a militarization of the border." In reality, this is exactly what is occurring.

The memo also reads, "The DPS and the National Guard are working to keep any drug and human trafficking south of [US Highway] 83 and with the goal of keeping any smuggling from entering major highways to transport East/West/and North."

The mobilization of National Guard troops along the southern Texas border will cost up to \$5 million a week. Funding for this will come from a state budget already struggling to provide vital social services to Texas residents.

Perry mentioned previously that the most humane policy for the child migrants is to send them back to their families in Central America and to stop them from ever arriving at the border. In reality, the majority of these children have family in the US and deporting

them back to Central America, which has some of the highest crime rates in the world, amounts to a death sentence.

According to Texas law, the governor can “adopt rules and regulations governing enlistment, organization, administration” of the Texas National Guard. The state governor, acting as commander in chief, is able to call upon the National Guard during times of state emergency. While the troops may be activated during a state declaration of emergency, usually for weather-related events, the National Guard has been employed to stop civil unrest and protests.

One only has to remember the Kent State massacre in 1970, when the Ohio National Guard opened fire on unarmed college students, killing four during an antiwar protest. Two of the victims were not even participating in the protest, and were only walking between classes when the troops opened fire.

While trained for military combat, National Guard troops do not have the authority to make arrests, stop, question or detain individuals. That such forces are being dispatched to the border to stop unaccompanied children from entering the United States raises the possibility of future violence and slaughter along the border.

Workers in the US must reject the lie that the deployment of National Guard is to “secure our border” from an “immigration crisis.” There exist enough resources in the US to provide a decent life and social rights to the thousands of migrants fleeing from poverty and violence in Central America to seek a better life.



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