

Texas National Guard deploys to US-Mexico border

Kevin Martinez
16 August 2014

The first units of Texas National guardsmen have begun deploying along the US-Mexico border, manning observation posts. They are the first wave of 1,000 troops called up by Republican Governor Rick Perry. The mobilization will cost \$12 million every month. This is in addition to the \$1.3 million Texas is spending each week for a “surge” of Texas Rangers to the border area.

The first group of National Guard troops will staff observation posts in Hidalgo that oversee the border crossing from the US into Mexico. They are supposedly there to back up the Border Patrol and report “suspicious activity.” They will not have the authority to detain anyone; instead their mission will be to “defer and refer” people to Border Patrol agents. However, National Guard troops are armed and are empowered to shoot in claimed “self defense,” significantly escalating tensions in an increasingly militarized area of the US.

In addition to stopping the flow of immigrants into the US, the arrival of National Guardsmen into the border has been justified as fighting “narco-terrorists” and Mexican drug cartels. The deployment’s principal political purpose, however, is to whip up support among anti-immigrant chauvinists and xenophobic elements. The aim is to blame the crisis of American society on persecuted immigrants who are escaping poverty and violence in countries destroyed by American imperialism.

In addition to the National Guard, far-right militias armed with guns and military equipment have begun patrolling the border on their own accord.

The deployment of the Texas National Guard to the border follows the recent surge of unaccompanied child migrants into the United States, most of whom come from Central America, including countries where regime change has been carried out with the crucial

supervision of the US State Department, like Honduras, or who have suffered the effects of near genocidal US-backed wars, such as El Salvador and Guatemala.

From October of last year through July, 63,000 unaccompanied children have been detained at the border, double the number detained the year before. In addition, 63,000 families, mother and fathers with young children, were detained in the same period.

The Obama administration has responded to this catastrophe by fast-tracking the deportation hearings of undocumented minors and dumping them back in the countries they tried to escape from, despite international calls that they receive sanctuary in the United States. The actions of the Democratic administration in Washington are entirely in sync with the independent efforts of the Texas Republican governor to militarize the border.

Despite the attempt to portray the situation on the border as an out-of-control crisis, arrests there have dramatically slowed, with the number of both unaccompanied youths and families detained dropping by about half in July from what they were the month before.

Governor Perry tried to take credit for this drop in detentions, but many attribute the decline to seasonal migration factors, a crackdown on immigration by the authorities in Mexico and Central America, and changes in smuggling routes. There has also been an overall decline in immigration into the United States over the last decade, as undocumented workers discover there are fewer and fewer jobs for them, especially after the recession that began in 2008. Apprehensions along the southern US border have dropped steadily, declining over the last decade by more than half, from 905,065 to 414,397, according to the Border Patrol.

While Governor Perry is pandering to the most backward layers of the Republican Party, the deployment of the National Guard further serves to further militarize the US-Mexico border and prepare the ground for a possible bloodbath involving innocent civilians, both American and Mexican.

To pay for the \$12 million a month operation, Gov. Perry is using state emergency funds worth \$38 million reserved for emergency radio infrastructure. While not explaining how long the operation will last or how it will be paid for in the long term, Perry criticized the federal government for not deploying more drones along the border and said that paying for the National Guard was the federal government's responsibility.

This deployment is not without precedent. In 2010, President Obama ordered 1,200 National Guard troops to take up positions along New Mexico's border, and in 2006, then-President Bush deployed 6,000 National Guardsmen in the American Southwest after state officials there requested them.

These deployments are part of the overall strategy of the ruling class to divert anger at declining living standards and deteriorating infrastructure toward a convenient scapegoat, defenseless and exploited foreign-born workers.



To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact