

US media silent over “state of emergency” declaration in Missouri

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The decision by Missouri Governor Jay Nixon to declare a preemptive “state of emergency” and activate the National Guard is an extraordinary and unprecedented act, with enormous implications for democratic rights in the United States. Nixon made the announcement this week as part of preparations for the announcement of a grand jury on whether or not to indict Darren Wilson, the police officer who killed unarmed Michael Brown in August.

One searches in vain in the establishment media, including its “left” representatives, for any criticism of the move, or even any serious analysis of its consequences. Outside the commentaries and interviews with area residents posted on the *World Socialist Web Site*, moreover, there is no reporting on the immense hostility among workers and youth in Ferguson to the decision, which is correctly seen as an assault on their democratic right to protest police violence.

The *Wall Street Journal* urges Obama to intensify the crackdown in order to “defend the rule of law and public order” in its editorial pages, while the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and the *Nation* magazine have not commented on the frontal attack on First Amendment rights taking place in Missouri.

The response of the media is part of systematic preparations by the state and the political establishment in anticipation of the announcement by the heavily manipulated grand jury proceedings.

This involves first of all plans for a further police-military crackdown, which is intended to set another precedent for similar measures in other cities throughout the country. The deployment of the National Guard and declaration of a state of emergency, at a time where no significant, let alone violent, protests are taking place, is an attempt by state, local and federal

officials to silence and intimidate opposition to police brutality and the policies of the ruling class as a whole.

On Tuesday, St Louis Mayor Slay said he had requested that 400 National Guard members be deployed in St. Louis, in addition to those that will be deployed to Ferguson and other towns. The National Guard will be stationed in 45 areas throughout the city, nominally to “prevent random acts of violence, property destruction, looting or other criminal activity away from the demonstrations,” according to Slay.

After describing plans to deploy a branch of the Armed Forces throughout the city he oversees, Slay made the Orwellian claim that “we do not want to appear to militarize our response to the demonstrations and want to do everything we can to de-escalate.”

These measures are being carefully coordinated with the Obama administration. In public, the White House has sought to distance itself from the appearance of direct involvement, telling reporters Tuesday that the governor is “making [the] decisions” about how to respond to the protests. However, according to a report in *The Hill*, a Washington, D.C. newspaper, Obama has been in regular contact with Nixon, a fellow Democrat, with the latest call between the two taking place on Tuesday.

Obama has also been “meeting regularly” with Attorney General Eric Holder and senior adviser Valerie Jarrett to discuss developments in Ferguson, *The Hill* reported.

On Monday, ABC News released an FBI intelligence bulletin issued to local police departments that warned that “extremists” are planning to carry out “attacks” against “critical infrastructure” in connection with the grand jury decision. The FBI is a subsidiary of the Justice Department and is under the control of the White House.

As it builds up the apparatus of repression, the ruling class is also seeking to bring on board the various self-styled “civil rights” leaders and other operatives who have worked to channel protests back behind the political establishment and the Democratic Party, particularly through the use of racial politics.

This is the principal significance of Nixon’s announcement Tuesday of the composition of the “Ferguson Commission,” tasked with investigating the “social and economic conditions” behind the protests. The commission is to be staffed by police officials, CEOs, foundation heads, pastors and other members of the political establishment. The toothless committee is expected to issue a report by September of next year.

As for the grand jury decision itself, the timing is being carefully planned. After initial indications that a decision would be announced early this week, prosecutors have evidently engineered a delay in order to allow more time to prepare for protests. The grand jury proceedings are being closely directed, and to the extent that there may be any question as to the outcome, it is only a matter of debates within the political establishment over the best way to curtail and suppress popular anger over the killing of Brown.

CNN reported Wednesday that “law enforcement officials” said that a final decision is likely to take place Friday, and would likely be announced Sunday. This would place the public announcement only a few days before Thanksgiving.



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