

Missouri governor triples national guard force in Ferguson

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26 November 2014

Missouri Governor Jay Nixon ordered an additional 1,500 National Guard troops to Ferguson Tuesday, bringing the total to 2,200, as part of a crackdown on protests in the St. Louis suburb over the exoneration of the police officer who shot and killed 18-year-old Michael Brown last August.

Nixon's decision to triple the number of soldiers followed a day of denunciations of "lawlessness" and "destruction" by the media and government officials, including President Obama, to justify the military occupation of the largely working class city.

Popular anger over the failure of Missouri authorities to indict officer Darren Wilson fueled protests across the United States on Tuesday. Demonstrations, marches and vigils took place in almost every state and in scores of cities, involving many thousands of workers and university and high school students. Large protests took place in New York City; Washington, DC; Baltimore, Maryland; Atlanta, Georgia; St. Louis; Los Angeles; and other cities. In Oakland, Democratic Mayor Jean Quan presided over a police attack on 2,000 protesters Monday night that resulted in the arrest of 40 people.

Throughout the day, CNN, MSNBC and other television networks decried the supposed lack of military preparedness in Ferguson on Monday night and demanded more state repression. This was despite the fact that the town of 21,000 people was already under a police-military lockdown, with some 700 National Guard troops backing up 600 local police and state highway patrolmen and an unknown number of FBI and other federal agents.

Last week, Governor Nixon, a Democrat, in advance of the decision of the grand jury hearing evidence on the killing of the unarmed African American youth and prior to any mass protests or disturbances, preemptively declared a state of emergency and announced plans to deploy the National Guard to Ferguson.

This provocative and flagrantly anti-democratic action

was followed Monday night by the arrogant and rambling remarks of State Prosecutor Robert P. McCulloch attempting to justify, in the name of "fairness," the decision of his rigged grand jury not to indict the killer cop, even on lesser charges of voluntary or involuntary manslaughter.

By all accounts, police and military forces essentially stood down following McCulloch's press conference while a number of stores were burnt or looted—giving the national news networks the footage needed to malign the protests. Shortly afterwards, the military operation began, with a phalanx of security forces in riot gear moving in behind armored vehicles, firing tear gas and rubber bullets at demonstrators and arresting at least 82 people.

For the most part, the media praised the supposed "restraint" of the police and pumped out grotesquely biased reports implying that the murder of an unarmed youth by an officer who fired 12 rounds into his victim was a legal and justified act of self-defense. ABC News broadcast an interview with Wilson in which the cop described Brown as a "demon."

CNN reporter Don Lemon declared that "any discussion of police brutality, racial profiling and militarization had been overshadowed by rioting and violence." The media vilified supposedly "criminal elements" for inciting violence, extending this slander to members of Michael Brown's grieving family. Throughout the day, CNN replayed a *New York Times* video of the angry reaction of the murdered youth's stepfather immediately after the decision to exonerate the cop was announced.

In a statement posted on his Facebook page Tuesday morning, St. Louis Mayor Francis Slay said, "What happened in Ferguson last night was not a 'peaceful protest.' It was criminal, and was nothing that our community can—or will—tolerate."

At his press conference, Nixon utilized the rhetoric of the "war on terror" to slander protesters and justify the

dispatch of another 1,500 National Guard troops. “Last night,” he said, “criminals intent on lawlessness and destruction terrorized this community, burning buildings, firing gunshots, vandalizing storefronts and looting family businesses.” He vowed to make sure there would be “no repeat of lawlessness.”

Nixon referred to the need for “force amplification,” “rapid response teams,” “trained and ready soldiers,” and “force protection” for the police. Other officials referred to the “rules of engagement” for dealing with protesters, employing the same language as US occupying forces in Iraq and Afghanistan.

During an appearance in Chicago, President Obama, whose Justice Department has worked closely with state and local officials in Missouri to organize mass repression, placed the onus for violence on the protesters and then suggested that those opposed to police brutality could address their grievances through the courts and state and federal authorities.

The previous night Obama had spoken from the White House to defend the grand jury decision while attempting to pose as sympathetic to those outraged by the murder of Brown and the green light for more police killings given by the authorities in Missouri.

In words that deserve only contempt, the author of drone assassinations and defender of mass spying declared, “Burning buildings, torching cars, destroying property, putting people at risk—that’s destructive, and there’s no excuse for it. Those are criminal acts, and people should be prosecuted if they engage in criminal acts.”

The murder of Michael Brown is but one instance of deadly police violence that is rampant across the US, affecting the entire working class. This fact of American life is rooted in immense and ever growing social inequality and the militarization of society. In the face of popular opposition to the destruction of jobs, living standards and social programs, and hostility to war, the government is increasingly resorting to the methods of a police state.



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