

National Guard referred to Ferguson protesters as “enemy forces”

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Internal documents circulated among National Guard commanders referred to peaceful protestors as “enemy forces” during the military/police crackdown against demonstrations in Ferguson, Missouri in August.

The documents were obtained by CNN through a Freedom of Information Act request. CNN reported Monday that “internal communications from as early as Aug. 14 through Nov. 18...show numerous uses of the terms [“enemy forces” and “adversaries”] that were sent to a large number of National Guard commanders and leadership.”

CNN reported that one document outlining the National Guard’s mission in Ferguson broke down groups as “Friendly Forces” and “Enemy Forces.” The list of “Enemy Forces” included both political organizations such as the New Black Panther Party and “General Protesters.”

The designation of thousands of peaceful demonstrators exercising their constitutionally protected right to assemble as “enemy forces” by the strategists designing the National Guard’s mission in Ferguson is emblematic of the growing militarization of society, and the conscious attempt by the political establishment to suppress political opposition through military violence.

Three months after the initial military deployment, Col. David Boyle, Army chief of staff of the Missouri National Guard, warned that the use of such language could be “construed as potentially inflammatory.” Officers were notified via email that “all references of ‘enemy’ were changed to state ‘criminal elements.’”

Col. Boyle wrote in a November 18th email to commanding officers that the military was trying to “minimize backlash” and “minimize public militarization perception.”

National Guard Capt. John Quinn responded to the

documents in an email to CNN. He stated that the terminology of “enemy forces” was a part of a “generic military planning format utilized in a wide range of military missions.” While attempting to defend the characterization, Quinn underscores an important point: the US military sees domestic deployment as an increasingly “generic” part of its “wide range of military missions.”

Following the eruption of mass protests over the killing of unarmed teenager Michael Brown, Democratic Missouri governor Jay Nixon declared a state of emergency and mobilized the National Guard, which supported police as they shot demonstrators with tear gas and rubber bullets and conducted mass arrests.

Snipers were positioned on the roofs of buildings, the constitutionally protected freedom of assembly was effectively suspended, and a no-fly zone was established around the area. As one protester told a *World Socialist Web Site* reporter, “If you look around right now, this is how it looks in a third world country, it looks like we are at war with the same people who are supposed to protect us.”

In November, Governor Jay Nixon preemptively declared a state of emergency in the city in anticipation of protests against a Grand Jury’s decision on whether to charge Darren Wilson, the cop who killed Brown. At the same time, the Obama Administration deployed FBI agents to target “extremists” in Ferguson.

Last June, the US Army released a report warning that “radical income disparity” would be the major “driver of instability” in the near future. Within this context, the world’s “megacities will be the strategic key terrain in any future crisis that requires U.S. military intervention.” According to the report, the Pentagon has conducted “case studies” and “field work” to prepare for interventions in areas including

New York City, among others.

Keeping in line with this spirit, New York City announced in January that it would form a 350-member Strategic Response Group to deal with protests and terrorist attacks. Democratic Mayor Bill de Blasio's Police Commissioner, William Bratton, said that the unit would be used for "disorder control." He noted that the officers would have "extra protective gear, the long rifles, machine guns, as is unfortunately necessary sometimes in these instances."



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