

# Police, National Guard raid Dakota Access pipeline protest camp, arrest 76

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With assistance from the National Guard, police raided a protest camp in Cannon Ball, North Dakota near the Dakota Access pipeline (DAPL) site on February 1, evicting and arresting seventy-six protesters opposed to the completion of the pipeline.

At about 4 pm, a convoy of bulldozers, Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles, and Long Range Acoustic Device sound cannons descended upon the protests camp. The protesters were forcibly removed from the camp and arrested, and the camp was razed.

Morton County Sheriff's Department called the camp a "rogue group of protesters" in a statement on Thursday, saying that they had illegally set up camp on private property. The property, which is situated on the pipeline route, belongs to Energy Transfer Partners (ETP), the company overseeing the construction of the pipeline.

The raid comes just a day after Republican Representative Kevin Cramer (Republican) announced that the Army Corps of Engineers had granted ETP the easement needed to tunnel under Lake Oahe, which supplies water to the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe.

The tribe had breathed a cautious sigh of relief on December 4, when the Army Corps of Engineers under the direction of the Obama administration announced that it would halt construction of the pipeline pending environmental review. The review process can take up to two years.

However, President Donald Trump issued an executive order on January 24, directing the Army Corps to "review and approve [the DAPL] in an expedited manner." Trump further demanded that the Corps withdraw the environmental impact requirement.

On January 31, Robert Speer, the Acting Secretary of the Army, reported that he had directed the Corps to

grant the easement needed to complete the pipeline. US Army chief of public affairs, Major General Malcolm Frost, said that they were acting upon Trump's orders to review construction requests to "construct and operate the Dakota Access pipeline in compliance with the law."

The Standing Rock Sioux Tribe's attorneys say that overriding the December 4 order by the Army Corps of Engineers is illegal. They have stated that they intend to continue to combat the pipeline's construction in court.

The Last Child Camp was one of several protest camps in the area. The Sacred Stone Camp, set up across the Cannonball River, is still occupied, as is the larger Oceti Sakowin Camp, which was set up on federal land last year. Law enforcement doubled down on the protesters late last year as the brutal North Dakota winter took hold.

In November, police blockaded demonstrators on a bridge at Highway 1806; when the protesters were hemmed in, police unleashed tear gas and water cannons upon them in the freezing temperatures, aiming at their heads and legs. Seven people were hospitalized immediately after the attack with severe head injuries. Protester Sophia Wilansky's arm was so severely damaged in the attack that it nearly required amputation.

The Morton County Sheriff's Department defended the attack, contradicting eyewitness accounts by saying that protesters had become "aggressive" and that they had started fires. Demonstrators have said that the fires were actually caused by projectiles hurled into the group by police.

Demonstrators surged to the site in the aftermath of the November attack. About 15,000 demonstrators had set up camp in December, including 4000 military

service veterans.

In recent weeks the numbers have declined, leaving only about 1100 activists. After discussions with law enforcement, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe leaders have encouraged protesters to disperse, citing the possibility of a flood. This has allowed the Morton County Sheriff's Department to put words into the Standing Rock Tribe's mouths and claim that the Last Child Camp was, in fact, a rogue camp where protesters' behavior had put the tribe's cause at risk. Several news outlets have attributed the statement by Morton County Sheriff's Department to the tribe itself.

Trump, it was revealed in the summer of 2016, owned between \$15,000 and \$50,000 of ETP stock. While he claims to have sold his shares in the company, he has staunchly refused to produce records substantiating his claims. ETP's CEO donated \$100,000 to Trump's election campaign.

Even with Trump's executive order the DAPL's fate remains unclear.

While Congressman Cramer crowed that the easement had been granted, posting on his website Wednesday night "Approved: Dakota Access Pipeline Receives Easement," alongside a photo of a shovel and the hashtag "#BuildIt," North Dakota Republican Senator John Hoeven, who chairs the US Senate Committee on Indian Affairs and supports the pipeline's construction, stated that the easement had not yet been granted.

Senator Hoeven has demanded that protests against the DAPL be shut down. He has portrayed the protesters as violent and irresponsible troublemakers who have endangered the safety and the economic well-being of area residents. Under Trump, the US government seems poised to force the pipeline's completion through no matter the human costs.

The protesters remaining in Cannon Ball have vowed to continue to seek to block the pipeline's construction regardless of whether the Army Corps of Engineers grants ETP an easement. The risks to the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe's drinking water are too dire, they say, to step down. Furthermore, they claim that the construction would be a violation of an 1851 treaty made between the US Government and the tribe.

Veterans Stand, a veterans' group sympathetic to the protests, has raised \$37,000 to send protesters to Standing Rock. "That pipeline will not get completed,"

the group's spokesperson, Anthony Diggs, told CNBC. "Not on our watch."



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