

Mexican government to vote on law expanding domestic military operations, authorizing mass spying

Alex Gonzalez
11 March 2017

Mexico's Chamber of Deputies is preparing to pass a law that provides the legal framework for the military to intervene in matters that "endanger stability, safety or public peace." The proposed law would also grant the armed forces the authority to "make use of any method of data collection" and would force non-governmental institutions, as well as private entities, to hand over users' private information. The Mexican Chamber of Deputies is expected to vote on the proposed law by April 20.

The Internal Security Law (*Ley de Seguridad Interior*), proposed in Congress last November, marks a milestone in the ruling class's efforts to defend its rule against mass mobilization of the Mexican working class. Widely discredited and deeply unpopular, the Peña Nieto administration is taking steps to ensure that any future social unrest is met with police state measures.

Under the proposed law, the Mexican Army, Marines and Air Force can be formally deployed for wide-reaching operations that include fighting organized crime, investigating corruption, combatting terrorism and "restoring order" after national disasters. In addition, the armed forces will be permanently tasked with "internal security," vaguely characterized as preventive actions "fundamental to anticipating the State's actions against phenomena that seek to violate internal order."

While the military has already been informally carrying out these operations without a legal framework under the guise of the decade-long "war on drugs," the Internal Security Law aims to legalize and make permanent the use of the military in conducting anti-drug operations, a move that is sure to produce further

human rights violations from a force already notorious for its acts of torture and abuse.

The Internal Security Law also lays the foundation for mass spying on the Mexican population. Telecommunications service providers will be forced to deliver "private communications, real-time geographical location or delivery of retained data on mobile communication equipment" without any form of judicial overview or accountability. According to the Digital Rights Defense Network, a Mexican privacy rights organization, the law's broad language leaves open the possibility for the government to ask application and content providers to "establish vulnerabilities, deliver encryption keys or establish another type of back door to facilitate surveillance."

The military, as stated in the proposed legislation, can be mobilized by the president at any time, as well as by Congressional actions. Last year, Mexico amended its constitution to grant the president the authority to establish a state of emergency and declare martial law in instances that "place society in grave danger or conflict." As with the Constitutional amendment, the Internal Security Law is a carte blanche for the State to suspend civil rights and suspend basic democratic rights under the pretext of fighting organized crime and preventing terrorist attacks.

The law is being sponsored by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and the National Action Party (PAN). Both parties have been in power during and have played a role in escalating the bloody war on drugs, which has killed over 166,000 and disappeared 28,000 over the last decade.

The National Regeneration Movement (Morena) and the Party for Democratic Revolution (PRD), the

nominal “left” Mexican bourgeois parties, have opposed the legislation from the standpoint of Mexican nationalism. “The drafting of the law does not express clearly that the Mexican Army is the only one that can perform interior security functions,” stated PRD congressman Alejandro Ojelda. Similarly, Morena congressman Paulo César Martínez López has noted the proposed law “opens the door to military operations by foreign armies.” In other words, the PRD and Morena want to ensure that the Mexican state will have the exclusive power to crack down on social opposition from the working class using military force.

Human rights groups and academics have widely denounced the proposed law, warning its adoption would gravely endanger human rights in the country. Over the past decade, the armed forces have been repeatedly found guilty of torture, extrajudicial executions and forced disappearances. The Mexican Federal Police and the armed forces have been implicated in the disappearance of the 43 Ayotzinapa students, while in Tlatlaya, 22 civilians were executed by the 102nd Infantry Battalion of the Mexican Army.

The Interior Security Law is being proposed in the context of an outbreak of social opposition against the policies of the Trump administration and the inability of the Mexican government to provide any defense for workers, youth and peasants on either side of the border.

Since the election of Trump, the Mexican government has been in crisis over how to balance its role as a junior partner of American imperialism and subdue mounting social anger at home over Trump’s bullying threats to deport millions of immigrants to Mexico, renegotiate NAFTA, build a border wall with Mexico, halt remittances to the country and send US troops to Mexico to take over the war on drugs.

The law also comes in the wake of mass demonstrations against the policies of the Peña Nieto administration, including the *gaxolinazo* protests at the beginning of the year, when thousands of workers mobilized across the country to block roads and highways, taking over processing and distribution centers, and shutting down transit services in many parts of the country.

In July of last year, teachers went on strike in Oaxaca against the regressive education policies of Peña Nieto’s “Pact for Mexico” in defense of public

education. After 13 were killed and dozens wounded when the Mexican federal police fired at striking teachers, 200,000 doctors and nurses struck in solidarity with the protesting teachers, and students at major universities boycotted classes to show their support.

In response, the Mexican ruling elite is building up the military to prepare for open class conflict. Mexico’s weapons imports have more than tripled in the last five years, according to a report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). Mexico is now the region’s second largest importer of weapons, buying \$7.9 billion in military equipment in 2015 alone.

Through the government’s military sales program, the Obama administration sold over \$2.5 billion in military equipment to Mexico from 2008 to 2016. Weapons purchased directly from US companies—another way the Mexican government can acquire US weapons—tripled to \$2 billion from 2011 to 2012.

Aude Felurant, an SIPRI analyst specializing in Latin American affairs, characterized the weaponry being brought into Mexico, including thousands of Humvees, dozens of Blackhawks, and millions of rounds of ammunition, as “the type of equipment that is imported to carry out counterinsurgency measures.”

Desperate to cling to its privileges and wealth, the Mexican ruling class will act quickly and violently to institute martial law and prevent social revolt from threatening its rule. In response, the working class must arm itself with revolutionary politics in a struggle for socialism and the unity of the international working class.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact