

Trump's attorney general threatens immigrants in speech at US-Mexico border

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13 April 2017

Tuesday marked another major escalation in the Trump administration's attack on immigrants. Attorney General Jeff Sessions speaking in the border town of Nogales, Arizona, threatened: "For those that continue to seek improper and illegal entry into this country, be forewarned, this is a new era. This is the Trump era."

"The lawlessness, the abdication of the duty to enforce our immigration laws, and the catch and release practices of old are over."

The selection of Nogales for Sessions's fascistic speech has historic significance. The small town of 20,000 was the center of the 1918 massacre provoked by US border agents who threatened to kill a Mexican carpenter legally crossing into the US. In the altercation that followed, US soldiers killed more than 100 Mexican civilians, including the mayor of Nogales, Sonora, and participants of the ongoing Mexican revolution.

Sessions's speech coincided with the publication of a new memorandum outlining new mechanisms for criminally prosecuting immigrants and anyone who attempts to protect them from deportation.

The memorandum calls for prosecuting people—immigrant and non-immigrant alike—who commit "unlawful transportation or harboring of aliens." The memo cites a statute that makes it illegal to "shield [immigrants] from detection."

While the statute targets "coyotes" who bring immigrants across the border, it also punishes parents who bring their children, as well as individuals who attempt to protect immigrants from detection. Under the statute, those who aid or shield immigrants face a possible five-year prison sentence.

The memo also directs federal prosecutors to press felony charges against immigrants who re-enter the US after a prior deportation, who commit identity fraud or

who enter into marriages that are fraudulent. Immigrants are often forced to acquire false Social Security numbers in order to gain employment, and immigration officials regularly claim bona-fide marriages are fraudulent, forcing couples to submit personal photos and love letters and spying on their homes and neighbors.

Tuesday's memo directs each prosecutor's office along the border to assign a designated "Border Security Coordinator" in charge of "the investigation and prosecution of the offenses listed above." These officers are also responsible for coordinating with local police to carry out raids of workplaces and homes.

The *Los Angeles Times* reported Wednesday that several California police departments are using policing manuals that direct police to target people they suspect of lacking immigration papers. The manual states that "a lack of English proficiency may be considered" as a factor in establishing reasonable suspicion that a person has committed a crime. The manuals, produced by the corporation Lexipol, are used by the cities of Blythe, Azusa, Brisbane, Culver City, Fontana, Fremont, Laguna Beach, Murrieta, Rialto, and Walnut Creek.

Local police are not the only agencies engaged in collaboration with Trump immigration officials. According to e-mails revealed by the American Civil Liberties Union, the Vermont Department of Motor Vehicles turned over undocumented people applying for licenses to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). In particular, the department turned over information of applicants for a special driver identification card intended for non-citizens. Roughly 50,000 immigrants have driver identification cards in Vermont.

The Trump administration has also hired policy advisors from the ultra-right-wing Center for

Immigration Studies (CIS) and Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) to lead the immigration round-up.

FAIR was founded by the white supremacist and eugenicist John Tanton, and its leaders have said Mexicans want to turn California into a “third world cesspool.”

ICE recently hired former CIS representative John Feere to serve as advisor to ICE Acting Director Thomas Homan.

Feere recently tweeted that “many pro-illegal immigration people simply hate Americans” and has promoted the work of the fascist white supremacist web site Vdare and the Holocaust-denying anti-Semitic *American Free Press*. Feere advocates repealing birthright citizenship for US-born children of immigrants. CIS has called immigrants “third world gold diggers.”

Customs and Border Protection (CBP) also recently hired Julie Kirchner, former FAIR executive director, as advisor to CBP acting commissioner Kevin McAleenan. Kirchner’s work has been widely cited by *Breitbart*. In 2016, she falsely claimed, “hundreds of foreign born terrorists have been apprehended in the United States alone.”

Responding to the appointments, Heidi Beirich of the Southern Poverty Law Center said, “We take these designations very seriously, and CIS and FAIR are far-right fringe groups that regularly publish racist, xenophobic material and spread misinformation about immigrants and immigration.”

The Democratic Party has dropped opposition to Trump’s attack on immigrants, focusing entirely on forcing Trump to carry out a pivot in geopolitical strategy aimed against Russia. The war atmosphere whipped up by the Democrats will only intensify the nationalist anti-immigrant climate.



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