

# National Guard, federal agents and police mobilize for Super Bowl LII in Minneapolis

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This Sunday, Minneapolis will be host to Super Bowl LII between the Philadelphia Eagles and the New England Patriots. The game will mark the first time since 1992 that the National Football League's championship game has been played in Minneapolis.

Now in its 52nd year, the Super Bowl is an annual celebration with nearly 100 million people expected to view the game on television or online, making it the most watched sporting event of the year in the US. Tens of thousands are expected to travel to Minneapolis this weekend with some 73,000 fans shelling out a record high average of \$5,300 per ticket to attend the game in person at U.S. Bank Stadium.

While officials in Minneapolis have sought to evoke a festive mood with signs promoting the game throughout the city and popular events planned for the days before the game itself, the lead-up to Super Bowl instead resembles a military occupation. The Department of Homeland Security has categorized the Super Bowl as a "Level One Special Event Assessment Rating," meaning that they view it as the highest threat potential for public safety, and thus it qualifies for federal assistance in funding for extra security measures releasing a flood of National Guard soldiers, military equipment and federal agents into the city.

Under the guise of security for the game and "combating ISIS," Minnesota is seeing its largest military-police build-up ever, even larger than for the 2008 Republican National Convention. Approximately 1,700 agents from the FBI, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and the Department of Homeland Security are supporting state and local law enforcement, along with the deployment of the Minnesota National Guard. Police officers from over 60 cities across the state gathered in Minneapolis days in advance to prepare for

the game. The combined police forces are being stationed at an undisclosed building near the U.S. Bank Stadium, ready to mobilize at a moment's notice.

From another undisclosed location, dubbed the Multi Agency Command Center (MACC), Federal agents, the National Guard, and local and statewide police officials will have access to live feeds from over 2,000 private and public surveillance cameras.

Some of the military-grade equipment that has been deployed includes armored vehicles, helicopters and even F-16 fighter jets from the National Guard which will be patrolling the skies during the game. Additionally, Polaris, a company more known for making recreational snowmobiles, has given police ten custom high-end off-road vehicles. The police presence is complemented by over two miles of police fencing and over 100 police dogs.

One of the more striking aspects of the security operations which are being carried out this weekend is the presence of ICE and CBP. Their website justifies their presence at the football game as being essential to combatting "counterfeit products." With immigration agents crawling all over the stadium and the surrounding areas, any incident could be used to justify the rounding workers up with ICE's gestapo-like tactics.

This is not the first time in recent years Minneapolis has been host to military-police operations. In August 2014, military helicopters conducted unannounced "urban warfare" exercises coordinated by DHS and the Pentagon in collaboration with the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul.

These exercises consisted of multiple helicopters maneuvering at low altitudes in-between buildings from morning to night, and military personnel rappelling onto rooftops. At the time, the WWSW

warned that this was not an isolated incident, but that it was, “part and parcel of preparations by the American ruling class for imperialist war abroad and for an intensified attack on the democratic rights of the population domestically.”

Recent developments confirm this. In August of last year, Trump issued an executive order that reduced restrictions on police departments obtaining military gear and broadened the types of gear they could obtain. Trump’s executive order has enabled police departments to obtain more combat-appropriate military equipment, such as tracked armored vehicles, grenade launchers, and weaponized vehicles and aircraft such as tanks, attack helicopters, and armed vessels.

Nonetheless the build-up of police-state capabilities didn’t begin with Trump. Under the Obama administration in 2014 and 2015 police departments across the country obtained a record \$2.2 billion in military gear, including assault rifles and armored vehicles. These two years saw a rapid growth of popular opposition to police killings after incidents like the police murder of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri in August 2014, and the murder of Freddie Gray in Baltimore by police officers in April 2015.

Terrified by mass dissatisfaction with ever growing levels of social inequality and popular opposition to war, the ruling class sees any mass gathering as a threat and uses any excuse to build up the framework for a police state.



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