

Trump proposes to deploy troops to US-Mexico border

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President Donald Trump's announcement yesterday that the government will deploy the military to the US-Mexico border is a threat to the safety of undocumented immigrants and a fundamental attack on the democratic rights of the entire population.

Trump made his announcement at the White House alongside Defense Secretary James Mattis. "We have very bad laws for our border," he declared, "and we are going to be doing some things." He continued: "I've been speaking with General Mattis. We're going to be doing things militarily. Until we can have a wall and proper security, we're going to be guarding our border with the military."

Though details of Trump's plan have not been announced, the deployment of the military on US soil to arrest or deter immigrants raises the specter of martial law and violates the basic democratic principle of posse comitatus, which proscribes the military from carrying out law enforcement.

Though the Bush and Obama administrations both deployed the National Guard to perform reconnaissance for Customs and Border Protection (CBP), Trump's plan may involve the use of the military for actual arrests and detention operations.

In February 2017, when White House Chief of Staff Gen. John Kelly was heading up the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), he circulated a memo proposing to deploy 100,000 members of the National Guard to states such as California and Texas to round up and deport immigrants. The administration has threatened to withhold funds or even arrest officials of a number of "sanctuary cities," some near the border, which have barred local law enforcement from voluntarily turning over information to immigration officials.

Trump made his announcement on the pretext of stopping a caravan of immigrants escaping Central American poverty and violence, tweeting that the group of

roughly 1,000 refugees "had better be stopped before it gets here." Although the caravan takes place annually near Easter and breaks apart far before reaching the US border, Trump used this year's "stations of the cross" march as a provocation to escalate his anti-immigrant attacks.

In a flood of statements since Sunday, Trump has called on Congress to pass a series of fascistic anti-immigrant measures, including immediate deportation of unaccompanied young immigrants and the mandatory detention of those captured without proper papers.

"We have horrible, horrible and very unsafe laws in the United States and we're going to be able to do something about that," Trump announced at a press conference with Baltic leaders yesterday. "Hopefully, Congress will get their acts together and create very powerful laws."

This is not empty rhetoric. In recent weeks, Trump and his far-right advisers have initiated plans to bar immigrants from using social programs, detain pregnant immigrants, and end protected status for immigrants from Liberia. On Monday, the Department of Justice set a quota for the nation's immigration judges, requiring that they dispose of at least 700 cases a year so as to speed up the pace of deportations. This amounts to an order to dispense with whatever remains of due process.

The decision to deploy troops along the border is also a thuggish threat by the imperialist superpower against Mexico. Yesterday, Trump mentioned the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in his comments defending the troop deployment. Addressing reporters at the White House, he said: "NAFTA has been a horrible, horrible, embarrassing deal for the United States. This should have been terminated or renegotiated years ago."

In this context, the positioning of soldiers on the border is intended to evoke a historical precedent: during the Mexican Revolution of 1910-1920, the US stationed

thousands of soldiers along the border, killing 800 Mexican soldiers and 400 civilians.

The Democratic Party does not oppose Trump's measures. In 2010, Obama sent 1,200 National Guard troops to the border region in a move that was praised by Democrats as well as the extreme-right. As Bernie Sanders said in January 2018, "If the president wants to work with us to make sure we have strong border security, let's do that."

Neither are the Democrats seriously opposing Trump's cuts in Medicaid and other social programs, his gutting of environmental and occupational safety regulations, his tax cuts for corporations and the rich, or his promotion of generals and billionaires to top White House and cabinet positions.

Their opposition is focused on right-wing attacks on Trump for failing to pursue the US diplomatic and military offensive against Russia in the Middle East and Eastern Europe with sufficient aggressiveness. Their campaign against supposed Russian meddling in US politics and alleged promotion of "fake news" is being used for the reactionary purposes of preparing for war and imposing censorship on the Internet.

Far from defending democratic rights against Trump's authoritarian methods, the Democrats, in alliance with the intelligence agencies, are spearheading the drive to silence and criminalize political dissent.

Just last week, the Democratic Party overwhelmingly supported a \$1.3 trillion budget deal that provides \$641 million in added funding for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the agency responsible for rounding up and jailing immigrants. They also approved the hiring of hundreds more CBP officials, and signed over an additional \$1.6 billion for the militarization of the US-Mexico border, including construction of a wall. They further agreed to give Trump the ability to expand the size of the nation's network of immigration internment camps "as necessary to ensure the detention of aliens prioritized for removal."

The Democrats have completely abandoned any effort to secure protection for 1.8 million people brought to the US as children who were eligible for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which expired March 5.

They only objected when Trump proposed to take money from the military budget to build his border wall. Last week, Democratic Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer said Trump should instead "use the money to help our troops."

Trump's announcement of the troop deployment expresses the profound crisis of bourgeois rule and comes under conditions of increasing tensions between competing factions of the ruling class, largely over questions of foreign policy.

Trump has sought to use the military as a mechanism for strengthening the personalist character of his presidency. In January 2017, he attempted to give his inauguration speech a military cast by deploying a row of soldiers to stand behind the podium. He was thwarted when the soldiers were ordered off the stage mid-speech.

Last month, Trump solidified plans to hold a military parade in Washington, scheduled for November 11, several days after the midterm congressional elections. The parade will be directed by Northern Command, the sector of the Pentagon responsible for military operations in North America.

These moves are aimed not only against Trump's rivals in the bourgeoisie. They are above all directed against the working class.

The announcement of the domestic troop deployment coincides with a growing strike movement led by teachers in West Virginia, Oklahoma, Arizona and Kentucky, which is unfolding largely outside the framework of the corporatist unions. Trump is escalating his xenophobic anti-immigrant campaign in an attempt to undercut the growth of social opposition, divide the working class, and direct the social anger along right-wing nationalist channels. At the same time, the move shows that the ruling class is preparing to respond to the class struggle in the same way it asserts its interests internationally: with brute force.



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