

Mexican government to deploy federal troops against immigrants on its southern border

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The Mexican government announced on April 10 that it will send an undisclosed number of soldiers of the National Gendarmerie to their southern border with Guatemala to block the flow of immigrants.

The announcement was made via video on the Facebook page of Manuel Velasco Coello, governor of the state of Chiapas and a member of the Ecologist Green Party of Mexico (PVEM). It also features Alfonso Navarrete Prida, Secretary of the Interior and a member of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI).

Univision published an article on April 11 titled “Mexico will send more soldiers to the border with Guatemala to curb migration of Central Americans” which reports on Velasco’s announcement. The article reports that Velasco said these measures are meant to “bolster security on our southern border.”

For all of the Mexican government’s posturing of being opposed to the Trump administration’s anti-immigrant policies, these lines prove that the Mexican government is itself undertaking anti-immigrant program against its poorer neighbors to the south. Velasco’s Facebook video claims the decision is based on “human rights” and “border security.” However, the efforts are aimed at blocking impoverished workers and peasants from escaping war-torn Central American countries from entering Mexico en route to the United States.

The move comes after the Trump administration announced plans to send up to 4,000 National Guard soldiers to the US-Mexico border, including 400 troops in California whose deployment was approved by Democratic Governor Jerry Brown. While Brown initially attempted to say that the soldiers will be there only to fight organized crime, the Trump administration has admitted that the deployment will free immigration agents and border guards to round-up immigrants for

deportation.

Mimicking their American overseers, the Mexican government’s heavily armed and armored soldiers will be sent to the state of Chiapas, which shares a 413-mile (664 km) border with Guatemala. As of this writing, no date has been revealed for when these soldiers will be sent, or even how many will be deployed.

Velasco’s promise for “dignified treatment, human treatment” is reiterated by Secretary of the Interior Navarrete who spoke with the Chiapas governor “about giving a broad framework for the protection of human rights.”

The Mexican National Gendarmerie was created by President Enrique Peña Nieto in 2014 as part of the fight against violence associated with narcotics trafficking. A 2012 article by *Expansion*, a Mexican news entity affiliated with CNN, explains the roots of the organization. It was first proposed by Peña Nieto when he was running for president with the primary goal of “trying to control the murders, kidnappings, and extortion by the drug cartels.”

In other words, the soldiers who will now be detaining Central American immigrants are the same soldiers involved in the violent campaign against narcotics traffickers within Mexico. This is an organization trained in the art of war and domestic repression. In the face of this, all claims that Mexico will protect Central Americans’ “human rights” with “dignified treatment” are exposed as lies.

In an April 5 video posted to his Twitter account, Peña Nieto laid out his so-called “fundamental principles” for dealing with the United States. His nationalist posturing is contained in his statement that, before anything else, he will “safeguard... our sovereignty and the dignity of the Mexican people.”

The government’s decision to send soldiers to its

border in conjunction with the United States shows that this is simply a piece of theater while the government works out favorable trade terms for the Mexican bourgeoisie in ongoing negotiations with the US over the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

Democratic rights in Mexico are already under threat from violence and state repression of social protest and strikes. In 2014, twenty-one young people were summarily executed in Tlatlaya, State of Mexico by the Mexican Army. In 2016, nine people were murdered in Oaxaca, after striking teachers and their supporters were attacked by federal and state police forces. The government claims that the police were not carrying firearms, but no real investigation has been conducted, and no one has been charged.

This move by the Mexican government to attack the rights of Central American immigrants belies the claim by many pseudo-left groups that attacks on immigrants are purely racist attacks. While the racism of the Trump administration is beyond doubt, the attacks on immigrants are an attack on the democratic rights of the whole working class, regardless of race, blocking their right to travel across the planet without fear of deportation or harassment. Such anti-democratic measures will only become more common and employed against all people, citizen and non-citizen alike, especially when they enter into struggle against the state.



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