

Defend immigrant workers against Trump's military crackdown

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The Trump administration is preparing to unleash extra-legal repression and naked military violence in a stunning escalation of its war against immigrants and refugees.

Administration officials Thursday confirmed plans by the Pentagon to deploy as many as 1,000 regular Army and Air Force troops to the US-Mexico border, augmenting a force of some 2,100 National Guard soldiers already deployed to the southwestern US border states.

The deployment is an act of war against the immigrant workers, most of them with families, who are participating in the caravan in which thousands of Hondurans, as well as some Salvadorans and Guatemalans, have begun an exodus from the brutal conditions of poverty and violence created by US imperialism in the countries of Central America.

While US officials are insisting that the active duty troops will be used only in “logistical support” roles and not to hunt down immigrants, no one should take these claims at face value. They are designed to obscure the fact that the deployment marks a fundamental violation of basic democratic principles, summed up in the Posse Comitatus Act, which bars the use of the US military to carry out law enforcement operations on US soil.

The real thinking behind the troop deployment was summed up by the secretary of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Kirstjen Nielsen, who told *Fox News*: “We do not have any intention *right now* to shoot at people, but they will be apprehended, however. But I also take my officers and agents, their own personal safety, extraordinarily seriously. They do have the ability, of course, to defend themselves.”

Nielsen's statement amounts to a thuggish threat to unleash armed force against immigrant workers—men, women and children—approaching the US border seeking refuge and asylum. Policies are being put in place under which the scenes of slaughter that have unfolded on the border between Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory of Gaza can be recreated along the Rio Grande.

The lawlessness of the US government is further exposed in a series of measures that are being prepared by the White

House, the Justice Department and DHS to impose a blanket denial of the right of Central Americans to apply for asylum in the United States.

Administration sources have indicated that Trump is preparing to issue a pair of executive orders as early as next week. One would impose a ban on entry by Central Americans similar to the anti-Muslim travel ban previously imposed by the US administration. The second would summarily deny asylum to anyone from Central America reaching the US border. These policies constitute a repudiation of international law regarding the treatment of refugees and brand the US as a rogue state.

Trump has prepared for these policies by demonizing the migrant workers fleeing Central America as the centerpiece of the Republican campaign for the midterm elections. Stoking xenophobia, nationalism and anti-immigrant chauvinism in an attempt to whip up his political base, the US president is also seeking, to the best of his ability, to disorient sections of workers with demagogic and reactionary claims about immigrants “stealing American jobs” and being responsible for crime and swelling welfare rolls.

All of these claims are lies. They are designed to divide the working class and scapegoat the most oppressed sections of the population for the assault on living standards and the vast social inequality created by capitalism and implemented through the policies of both parties of big business, the Democrats and Republicans.

The men, women and children who have banded together to make the perilous escape from the hellish conditions in their home countries and reach the US border are working people who are seeking nothing more nor less than what every worker in the United States is struggling for and deserves: a job with a livable income, decent housing, healthcare and education and a better future for his or her children.

The fear-mongering against these working class people, marching with blistered feet and pushing baby carriages in a desperate bid to reach safety, is emblematic of a decayed

social order. The demonization of immigrants is one of the foulest expressions of the crisis-ridden capitalist system.

Writing in 1940, in the midst of a global capitalist crisis erupting into world war, Leon Trotsky pointed to the turning away of Jewish refugees fleeing Hitler:

The world of decaying capitalism is overcrowded. The question of admitting a few hundred extra refugees becomes a major problem for such a world power as the United States. In an era of aviation, telegraph, telephone, radio and television, travel from country to country is paralyzed by passports and visas... Amid the vast expanse of land and the marvels of technology, which has also conquered the skies for man as well as the earth, the bourgeoisie has managed to convert our planet into a foul prison.

Today, with the unprecedented global integration of production and the linking up of the planet with instantaneous internet communication, the reactionary and irrational character of the militarization of national borders has become ever more blatant.

Rejecting the slanders of the Trump administrations, the brave Central Americans marching through Mexico have taken up the chant, “Migrants are not criminals! We are international workers!” And so they are.

Who will defend these workers against the threats of military violence and the denial of their basic rights under international law and as members of the human race?

Certainly not the Democratic Party, which under Obama, dubbed the “deporter in chief,” carried out the expulsion of a record 2.5 million immigrants. It has since adapted itself fully to Trump’s anti-immigrant campaign.

A statement issued by the House and Senate Democratic leaders, Nancy Pelosi and Charles Schumer, accused the president of trying to “change the subject from health care to immigration,” as if the issue of how immigrants and refugees are treated is of no consequence. Tim Kaine, the Democratic senator from Virginia and 2016 vice presidential candidate, said while campaigning in Wisconsin Wednesday that Trump should get Mexico to “deal with these folks.” In other words, get the Mexican government to jail and shoot these people before they arrive at the US border.

Not the unions. The AFL-CIO, the United Auto Workers, the Teamsters and the other bureaucratized union organizations have said not a word in defense of the immigrant workers. All of them have aligned themselves with the “America First” nationalism of the White House, even as they work to betray and suppress every struggle

initiated by workers in the US.

As for the various organizations of the pseudo-left—the International Socialist Organization, the Democratic Socialists of America, etc.—they have said little or nothing about the Central American migrants and the threats they are facing. All of them support and adapt themselves to the nationalist unions and the Democratic Party.

The defense of immigrant workers and refugees fleeing for their lives can come only from the American working class, itself the product of centuries of immigration, and the revival of international class solidarity and the principle that “an injury to one is an injury to all.”

These are no mere words. The use of the military against immigrants at the border—just like the militarized factory raids carried out by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), in which entire shifts are marched out of workplaces at gunpoint to be interrogated and detained—are creating the precedents for martial law and a police state to suppress any struggles mounted by the working class and arrest and imprison those who lead them.

Against the nationalist demagoguery and anti-immigrant chauvinism promoted by the US ruling elite, the working class must advance its own internationalist and socialist strategy. This must be based on the understanding that it is impossible for workers in the US or any other country to wage a successful struggle against globally mobile capitalist corporations without uniting their struggles across national boundaries with those of workers of every other country.

The cutting edge of this strategy is an uncompromising rejection of the anti-immigrant poison peddled by Trump and the rest of the capitalist politicians and a fight for open borders—that is, the right of workers from every part of the world to live in the country of their choice, with full citizenship rights, including the right to work and travel without fear of repression or deportation.

The threat of military violence and summary deportation against those fleeing north from Central America must be answered with the broadest possible mobilization of workers and young people in defense of the rights of immigrants, as part of the struggle to mobilize the international working class against war, social inequality and the capitalist system.



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