

# US military, border police attack asylum seekers at US-Mexico border

Eric London

26 November 2018

A combined force of the US military and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) pointed assault rifles and fired tear gas, rubber bullets and flash bang grenades at impoverished workers and their families yesterday. The crowd, which included many women and young children, attempted to cross the US-Mexico border between San Diego and Tijuana to apply for asylum.

US officials then closed the San Ysidro border crossing in both directions as families attempted to return from the Thanksgiving holiday and Black Friday shopping. The crossing is the busiest in the Western Hemisphere, used by 90,000 people per day.

The chaos of the crackdown produced scenes reminiscent of an active war zone.

US soldiers in full battle gear deployed with armored vehicles and multiple attack helicopters as troops confronted a crowd of peaceful immigrants escaping poverty and violence in their home countries in Central America.

“Children were screaming and coughing in the mayhem,” San Francisco’s KRON 4 News explained, while the *Los Angeles Times* reported, “Some mothers ran under a train, clutching their crying children.”

Mexico’s *Proceso* wrote, “Immigrants shouted that they only wanted to cross to have a better life and to work.” When the US government fired tear gas, “The crowd tried to protect itself from the gas by covering their faces while mothers helped their children.”

As the US military unwound barbed wire fence at the San Ysidro border crossing, a loudspeaker warned: “This is a federally restricted area” and entry will result in “possible use of force.”

In a statement following the military crackdown, Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen warned: “DHS will not tolerate this type of lawlessness and will not hesitate to shut down ports of entry for security and public safety reasons. We will also

seek to prosecute to the fullest extent of the law anyone who destroys federal property, endangers our frontline operators, or violates our nation’s sovereignty.”

The US government has been preparing to use violence against the estimated 6,000 immigrants from Mexico and Central America. The immigrants have been housed in a sports stadium near the border where food and other necessities are in short supply and desperate refugees are growing impatient.

Yesterday, the US Army Northern Command posted photos of military police conducting riot control training at the San Ysidro port of entry “to secure the southern border of the United States.”

Just hours before yesterday’s attack, Donald Trump tweeted, “Would be very SMART if Mexico would stop the Caravans long before they get to our Southern Border, or if originating countries would not let them form (it is a way they get certain people out of their country and dump in U.S. No longer). Dems created this problem. No crossings!”

On Saturday night Trump boasted that the government is indefinitely detaining immigrants: “Our very strong policy is Catch and Detain. No ‘Releasing’ into the U.S... All will stay in Mexico. If for any reason it becomes necessary, we will CLOSE our Southern Border.”

Trump’s fascistic denunciations of immigrants came after CBS News reported Tuesday that Trump Chief of Staff John Kelly signed a memo granting the military the power to conduct “a show or use of force (including lethal force, where necessary), crowd control, temporary detention, and cursory search.”

This gives the lie to the claims by the Democratic Party and the corporate media that Trump’s troop deployment was merely a “distraction” or an election “ploy.” Kelly, for whom nearly all Senate Democrats voted to confirm in 2017 (including the nominally “independent” Bernie Sanders), is advancing Trump’s deliberate effort to (1)

fan the flames of extreme right-wing xenophobia and (2) cultivate a personalist support base in the military and “homeland security” apparatus.

In response, the Democratic Party has deliberately oriented itself *toward* Trump’s anti-immigrant policies, even after winning back control of the House of Representatives in the midterm elections.

Speaking yesterday on CNN, Democratic Congresswoman and likely House Financial Services Committee Chair Maxine Waters said there is “an immigration problem.”

“All members [of Congress] believe we have a right to close our borders,” she said, saying that immigrants “rushing and storming the border, that certainly looks bad. That looks like they are at fault for all of this.”

Waters added that the Democratic Party supported “comprehensive immigration reform led by the President of the United States.”

When Democratic Senator Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota was asked by George Stephanopoulos yesterday whether Democrats are “open to any negotiation on this border wall funding” with Trump, she replied: “We have tried to negotiate with him but he won’t take yes for an answer.”

Speaking earlier in November to the British *Guardian*, former Democratic presidential candidate and Secretary of State John Kerry blamed immigrants for the rise of the far-right in Europe: “Look at Europe! Europe’s already crushed under this transformation that’s taken place because of immigration.”

Hillary Clinton made similar comments last week, also to the *Guardian*: “I think it is fair to say Europe has done its part and must send a very clear message—‘we are not going to be able to continue providing refuge and support’—because if we don’t deal with the migration issue it will continue to roil the body politic.”

In the midst of this across-the-board adaptation to Trump’s xenophobia and antidemocratic measures, Democratic “progressives” like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez have dropped previous calls for the abolition of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). In a November 21 tweet referencing seven Democratic Party “priorities,” Ocasio-Cortez tellingly omitted “immigration” from the list.

During a seven-minute interview on yesterday morning’s *Face the Nation*, Bernie Sanders made no reference to the threats against immigrants or democratic rights. The online front page of the pro-Democratic Socialists of America *Jacobin* magazine likewise features

zero articles addressing the defense of the rights of immigrant workers.

Aided by the Democratic Party and its political affiliates, the Trump administration is preparing further measures against immigrants.

According to the *Washington Post*, the Trump administration reached an agreement with incoming Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (AMLO) whereby Mexico would house Central Americans in camps on the Mexican side of the US-Mexico border in blatant violation of the right to asylum.

Fearing that such a move would produce widespread hostility among the Mexican working class, a spokesperson for AMLO denied that the deal was reached, saying that any agreements with Trump on immigration would be announced when the new government is seated this Saturday.

Meanwhile, conditions in the makeshift Tijuana shelter are growing worse.

“Desperation has led some people to really believe that crossing is possible,” Alex Almendares, a 22-year-old member of the caravan from Honduras told the *Washington Post*. “The US has given us no response, and the situation at the shelter keeps getting worse.”

Elizabeth Chirinos also told the *Post*: “The US isn’t letting us through and I can’t live in those conditions in the shelter. I want to go to the US and not stay in Mexico because there are more opportunities.”

Late Friday, a 26-year-old mother of 3- and 5-year-old children was impaled while attempting to climb over a fence at the border in Tijuana. Though she survived, CBP denounced the woman as “foolish” saying she “placed her own and her children’s lives in peril.”



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**