Trump threatens to use military to fund border wall

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In a series of tweets Tuesday morning, President Donald Trump threatened to bypass the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and have the military build a wall along the US-Mexico border. After congratulating the government agencies for "securing" the border, he criticized the Democrats for wanting "Open Borders for anyone to come in. This brings large scale crime and disease."

In a later tweet, Trump stated, "I look forward to my meeting with Chuck Schumer & Nancy Pelosi. In 2006, Democrats voted for a Wall, and they were right to do so. Today, they no longer want Border Security." He later threatened ominously, "If the Democrats do not give us the votes to secure our Country, the Military will build the remaining sections of the Wall. They know how important it is!"

Trump's fascistic statements in which he once again slandered immigrants fleeing poverty and violence as criminals and carriers of disease was soon followed by a meeting in the Oval Office with Pelosi, the Democratic House minority leader, and Schumer, the Senate minority leader, over funding for the border among other things.

The meeting, which was joined by Vice President Mike Pence and members of the media, saw Trump argue with his Democratic counterparts as to who would be to blame following a possible government shutdown. It comes in the context of a growing political crisis for the Trump administration in which the president has fired his chief of staff, John Kelly, and calls for the Trump's impeachment over campaign finance violations have been floated by two top members of the House Democratic leadership.

Now that the White House finds itself in isolation and disarray, it has doubled down on efforts to create an extra-parliamentary movement based on the far-right and the military and other state agencies loyal to the Trump family. The anti-immigrant poison spewed by the President and his desperate attempts to build a border wall flow directly from this campaign.

The meeting itself between Trump and Pelosi and Schumer revealed that whatever the sometimes heated but superficial differences between the Democrats and Republicans, they are in complete agreement over the main policy objectives of the ruling class.

With a potential shutdown looming on December 21 for some government agencies, Trump threatened, "If we don't get what we want, one way or the other, whether it's through you, through military, through anything you want to call, I will shut down the government," adding "I will take the mantle. I will be the one to shut it down."

Trump's first public meeting with the Democrats since the midterm election gains was seen by many observers as an indication as to how his administration will work with the incoming Congress. Despite massive public hostility and repudiation of Trump's far-right policies, the Democrats once again pledged their willingness to work with the Republicans at every step of the way.

When Trump's comments turned toward funding for the wall, he said, "And then we have the easy one, the wall. That will be the easiest of all, what do you think Chuck?" To which Schumer replied, "It's called funding the government."

Pelosi reminded Trump that he did not have the necessary House votes to secure funding for a border wall, with Trump snapping back, "Nancy, I do."

Pelosi continued, "I don't think we should have a debate in front of the press on this." Presumably, a rotten deal worked out behind the scenes, with no public debate, is Pelosi's preference.

Trump then went on the offensive saying, "Nancy, we need border security, it's very simple." Pelosi responded, "Of course we do."

The president then repeated the lie that there were terrorists crossing the border with the immigrant caravan and that his administration apprehended 10 of them "over

a very short period of time." Pelosi, not surprisingly, did not challenge Trump on this.

It was left to Schumer to add, "We have a disagreement about the wall. Whether it's effective or not. Not on border security, but on the wall."

The meeting descended into Trump arguing with Pelosi and Schumer over this question, with the Democrats proving their eagerness to increase funding for "border security." Schumer concluded by saying, "Let's debate this in private." Trump then managed to get both Pelosi and Schumer to say once more they supported border security, prompting him to idiotically smile to the assembled press and declare, "See? We get along."

Outgoing Republican House Speaker Paul Ryan admitted this week that the House has yet to pass legislation that includes $5 billion for physical barriers and militarized technology along the US southern border. The Senate has already agreed to $1.6 billion in additional funds.

Pelosi and Schumer have urged Trump to support a measure that includes a half-dozen spending bills, in addition to a separate measure that would include funding for DHS at current levels until September 30. The DHS bill includes about $1.3 billion for increased militarization of the border.

Meanwhile, the plight of immigrants at the US-Mexico border has all but disappeared from the corporate news headlines. This week saw a report from the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agency that documented a spike in the number of immigrants applying for asylum at the US southern border.

The number of immigrants applying for asylum at a port of entry doubled in the fiscal year of 2018 compared to the year prior, while the number immigrants who entered the country illegally remained flat.

Despite the Trump administration's mobilization of 2,000 National Guard troops and almost 6,000 active-duty military troops to the border, it has proven to be no deterrence to those immigrants, fleeing violence in their home countries, who are turning themselves into a port of entry and making an asylum claim.

From 2000 to 2016, the US government granted asylum to an average of 26,651 foreigners a year, according to the DHS. In fiscal year 2018, the number was 38,269 people applying for asylum, with 31 percent deemed "inadmissible" by port officers.

In the same time frame, the number of people crossing illegally into the US remained steady. In 2018, 14 percent of all illegal border crossers requested asylum, up from 13 percent in 2017.

Asylum seekers are forced to wait days, if not weeks, until their application is taken up for consideration at a US port of entry. Due to the influx of immigrants from the devastated regions of Central America, border patrol officers are unable to cope with all the claims and are forced to start "queue management systems" to filter all the applicants.

At a conference call Monday, a CBP official was asked by reporters why additional resources were not being made to process more asylum seekers' claims. The official, speaking anonymously, said such moves would distract CBP from drug enforcement and national security operations.

"To shift resources away from those other competing priorities so that we would process more migrants…does come at a negative impact of those other missions," the official said. "So every day we try to balance the right mix."

The Trump administration had recently tried to end asylum for those who crossed illegally into the country but was rebuked by a federal judge.

In other developments at the border, 32 people were arrested Monday in San Diego's Friendship Park, which lies adjacent to the border wall, as part of an interfaith rally organized by the American Friends Service Committee in solidarity with the migrant caravan.

According to CBP, 31 people were arrested on suspicion of trespassing in an "enforcement zone," and one person was arrested for assaulting an agent. The rally was the second confrontation between agents, dressed in riot gear, at the border following a confrontation on November 25 that ended with Border Patrol and military units firing tear gas at defenseless women and children and prompting a five-hour closure of the busiest border crossing in the world.

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