

Trump to deploy more troops to US-Mexico border on semi-permanent basis

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According to press reports yesterday, the Trump administration is preparing a semi-permanent deployment of the military on the US-Mexico border.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has requested thousands more troops to militarize 160 miles of the southern border in California and Arizona in a deployment that will likely extend to September, multiple administration officials told NPR. The deployment announced by Trump last October was scheduled to expire later this month.

The announcement comes as the government shutdown approaches the end of its second week. The public face of the dispute centers on a relatively small amount of money to be spent jailing and deporting immigrants, which both parties euphemistically call “border security.” In reality, the population has been kept in the dark about the real issues behind the dispute, which most likely relate to high-level disputes between the Democratic and Republican parties over foreign policy.

Both parties agree on massive expenditures for militarizing the border and deporting immigrants. Democrats have already agreed to provide Trump’s deportation and detention machine with \$1.6 billion, only a few billion short of the \$5 billion Trump is demanding. Last year, Democrats agreed to provide Trump with \$25 billion, which included funds to construct a border wall.

Trump, whose administration is increasingly encircled by a host of investigations, has used the shutdown to appeal to his fascist base.

As DHS announced its plans for a further troop deployment, Trump made an impromptu public appearance yesterday in the White House press briefing room alongside several leaders of the National Border Patrol Council, the fascist trade union representing

border patrol officers.

The stunt featured Trump standing in front of a row of thick-necked, shiny-headed Mussolini look-alike union leaders who all decried the crimes committed by immigrants and the need for a border wall. Trump used the occasion to assert that there are presently “17,000 criminals trying to get across the border” as the American Gestapo officers nodded in approval.

Trump also tweeted a xenophobic video on his official account yesterday which showed crowds of immigrants supposedly marching toward the US with the ominous words, “crime...drugs...lawlessness...” appearing on the screen.

Behind Trump’s racist and fascistic appeals, the infrastructure of the US government is moving ever more toward physical violence and more brutal methods of detaining immigrants.

Last week, the *Arizona Republic* published videos of immigrant children recently being hit, pushed and dragged through the halls of a Youngstown, Arizona child immigrant detention center run by Southwest Key. According to the *Republic*:

One surveillance video shows a male staffer dragging and pulling a boy into a room, then slapping him and pushing him against a wall...A second video shows a female staffer hustling a child through a conference room, then dragging the child into an adjoining room because the child had lain down and tried to block the doorway with their legs...As that is happening, another staffer pulls a child with extended arms into the same room. All the while, workers doing other tasks in the conference room go about their business, with one seen adjusting her

ponytail.

Meanwhile, federal officials are proposing to eliminate whatever mild restrictions remain against indefinite detention of children.

Yesterday, DHS Spokeswoman Katie Waldman wrote an exclusive statement to the far-right *Breitbart News*: “This humanitarian crisis is driven by court rulings and poorly written laws that incentivize the smuggling of illegal immigrants under the age of 18. Funding the border wall, amending the TVPRA, and ending the Flores Settlement Agreement will put smugglers and traffickers out of business and protect vulnerable populations.”

These proposals, communicated surreptitiously to the extreme-right, would mark unprecedented attacks on the conditions of tens of thousands of immigrant youth apprehended at the border.

The Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPRA) grants certain legal protections for children, including sex slaves and child laborers, who are smuggled into the United States. The DHS proposal communicated to *Breitbart* would mean the 15,000 children currently detained in “shelters” would be sent to even harsher immigrant detention centers and would not be released to family.

The Flores Settlement Agreement mandates that family and child detainees must be released from incarceration as quickly as possible. Though the Flores Settlement requires families and children not be detained for longer than 20 days, this is already regularly violated.

The increased use of physical violence against immigrants was on display on New Year’s Day, when Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agents fired teargas at immigrants along the border, closed the Otay Mesa port of entry near San Diego and detained roughly 25 people. This attack took place in the aftermath of the death of two Guatemalan immigrant children in US custody in December.

These developments have dangerous implications.

The increased involvement of the border patrol unions in national political life, as well as their New Year’s riot at the border, underscore that the growth and cultivation of extreme right-wing tendencies is coming in large part from within the state apparatus

itself.

It is possible that increased brutality by CBP and Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers is a partial protest over the fact that they are working without pay during the ongoing government shutdown. Such a protest, which follows the strange decision by CBP last week to release 1,000 immigrants in El Paso, Texas, would indicate there is widespread support within these repressive agencies for ever more brutal, violent, and criminal crackdowns on immigrants.

Prominent trade union bureaucrats like the American Federation of Teachers’ Randi Weingarten, whose salary is well above \$500,000, are adapting to these far-right tendencies.

Yesterday, Weingarten tweeted: “Tens of thousands of US immigration officers and agents are showing up for work each day to guard the Mexico border, where President Trump insists on putting a wall. But the government is shut down, so no one is getting paid.”

Hollow references to the wall aside, Weingarten, who is well connected to the state and military-police apparatus, is sending a deliberate message of support to the CBP and ICE agents responsible for the most vicious attacks on immigrants, including children.

The decision to deploy more troops to the border is a warning sign to all workers. The move comes just a week before 30,000 teachers are planning to strike in Los Angeles, a heavily-immigrant working class city located just over 100 miles from the US-Mexico border. In the end, the round-up of immigrants, the attacks on due process, and the militarization of American society are aimed against all workers, regardless of immigration status.



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