

After Democrats fund concentration camps

Trump renews threat of mass immigrant raids “sometime after July Fourth”

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Speaking at a news conference after the G-20 summit in Japan, President Donald Trump said that Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) would soon carry out the mass round-ups of immigrants that he had originally ordered for June 23.

“Unless we do something pretty miraculous,” he said, the raids would begin “sometime after July Fourth.” He added, “We will be removing large numbers of people.”

The raids were set to begin June 23 in ten cities, including Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, New York City, Washington and Houston, with thousands of ICE agents to deploy into immigrant neighborhoods. They have orders to arrest not only specific targeted individuals, but any undocumented person they encountered in the course of the sweeps. ICE officials emphasized that they would seize entire families as part of the raids.

Trump temporarily postponed the raids on June 22 after a telephone conversation with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. The leading congressional Democrat evidently pleaded with Trump to delay the raids until after passage of a \$4.6 billion emergency appropriations bill providing money for the network of detention facilities along the US-Mexico border.

It is highly likely that Pelosi argued that it would be more politically difficult for the Democrats to approve the plan if they had to vote amid widespread publicity over ICE agents smashing down doors, dragging away families, including babies and small children, and locking them up or deporting them summarily.

The bill was passed last week with a majority of both Senate and House Democrats voting to provide the massive increase in funding for Trump’s concentration

camps. Two days after the House vote that sent the legislation to the White House for Trump’s signature, the president announced that the raids would now proceed, as soon as next weekend.

The passage of the funding bill makes the Democrats full partners with Trump in the savage repression of immigrants, which is a preparation for similar attacks on the working class as a whole. Trump paid tribute to Pelosi in his remarks in Japan. “She really worked with us,” he said.

The president also spelled out the brutal logic of the regime ICE and the Customs and Border Patrol have established along the US-Mexico border and more generally against immigrant workers. He made his first comment on the deaths of Óscar Alberto Martínez Ramírez and his 23-month-old daughter Valeria, drowned in the Rio Grande river in Mexico last week. “If they thought it was hard to get in, they wouldn’t be coming up,” Trump said. “So many lives would be saved.”

Trump was echoing the comments of his nominee to head the US Citizenship and Immigration Services unit of the Department of Homeland Security, Ken Cuccinelli, who blamed the young father for his own death and the death of his child.

“The reason we have tragedies like that on the border is because that father didn’t wait to go through the asylum process in the legal fashion and decided to cross the river and not only died but his daughter died tragically as well,” said Cuccinelli, an ultra-right former attorney general of the state of Virginia. “Until we fix the attractions in our asylum system, people like that father and that child are going to continue to come through a dangerous trip.”

In effect, Trump, Cuccinelli and Trump's fascistic immigration adviser Stephen Miller are claiming that the proper response to tragedies like the death of Martínez Ramírez and his daughter was to harden the border and make crossing it so potentially lethal that no one will dare to attempt it.

Trump underscored this perspective during his visit to the Demilitarized Zone between North and South Korea, where he met with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un. He praised the barbed wire, mines and massed weaponry along the DMZ, the most heavily fortified border in the world, saying, "By the way, when you talk about a wall when you talk about a border, that's what they call a border. Nobody goes through that border." He added, "That's called a real border."

It is typical of Trump that he gushes over a genuine monstrosity. The Korean DMZ is maintained by a Stalinist police state on one side and US-armed Seoul regime on the other, with the fifth and seventh-largest armies in world facing each other along a front 155 miles long, where violent death is the inevitable fate of any border-crosser.

A report issued last week by Syracuse University's Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse sheds light on the current operations of ICE against immigrants throughout the United States. The university project collects and collates federal government reports, and it calculated the rate of "community arrests" per 1,000 undocumented immigrants, based on ICE reports and estimates. "Community arrests" are those carried out by ICE through encounters in the community or at workplaces, as opposed to "custodial arrests" when another police agency turns an arrested immigrant over to ICE.

Pennsylvania and Michigan have the highest and second highest rates of arrests per 1,000 undocumented immigrants during the last fiscal year, 25.6 and 11.6 respectively. The state of Ohio was third, 11.4 per 1,000. These figures strongly suggested that the "community arrest" rate, a measure of how active ICE is in immigrant neighborhoods, is driven by the political considerations of the Trump reelection campaign.

Pennsylvania and Michigan were two of three Midwest industrial states, along with Wisconsin, which tipped the balance to Trump in the Electoral College in 2016; as for Ohio, no Republican has ever been elected

president without winning that state, but Trump currently trails in the polls there, as he does nationwide. Trump's top aides no doubt calculate that more widespread arrests in those states will excite Trump's fascistic base as well as intimidate Hispanic, Asian and other minority voters.

Meanwhile, court action continues on an array of Trump's anti-immigrant actions. A federal judge in Oakland, California issued an injunction temporarily barring construction of four portions of the proposed border wall near El Centro, California, and Tucson, Arizona. District Judge Haywood Gilliam barred the Pentagon from shifting \$1.5 billion from military training accounts to construction accounts. Judge Gilliam previously barred transfer of another \$1 billion for border construction in Arizona and New Mexico.

In both cases, Gilliam was acting on the basis of suits by environmentalists and border communities affected by the planned wall construction, and found that Trump had exceeded his authority as president by shifting funds in defiance of Congress, which has the sole constitutional authority over spending. The Trump administration is appealing both rulings to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco.

Federal District Judge Dolly Gee in Los Angeles, who oversees the so-called Flores settlement that governs the treatment of children detained by immigration authorities, issued a separate order Friday setting a deadline of July 12 for the government to report on efforts to improve conditions in detention centers recently exposed as hellholes. The court did not order specific improvements, but it instructed a court-appointed monitor to take action for the "prompt remediation" of conditions at the detention centers.



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