

Trump unleashes torrent of militarism in Fourth of July speech

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US President Donald Trump gave an extended paean to the American war machine in his Fourth of July address yesterday evening at the National Mall in Washington.

Beneath Trump's trademark bombast, the event gave the impression of a regime that is isolated and wracked by crisis, a speech from the bunker. Trump delivered his remarks from behind a wall of bulletproof glass, on a stage flanked on both sides by tanks and armored vehicles.

Members of the general public, alongside hand-picked VIPs and members of the military seated close to the stage, attended. The event was televised live in its entirety by the pro-Trump Fox News Channel, and with some commercial interruptions by CNN. The four broadcast channels, ABC, NBC, CBS and Fox, all ran their regular programming.

The aim of Trump's insertion of himself into the traditional Fourth of July celebrations was to promote an authoritarian, personalist form of rule, resting on a narrow layer of ultra-right supporters and sections of the military.

More than two-thirds of Trump's hour-long address consisted of homages to each of the five major branches of the American military, followed by flyovers of military aircraft from each.

This included the F-18, F-22 and F-35 fighter jets, nuclear-capable B-2 strategic bombers, and attack helicopters. Mixed in with these instruments of war were Air Force One and Marine One, the personal transports of the US presidents and well-known accoutrements of the office.

During the procession of aircraft, Trump was flanked on stage by Acting Secretary of Defense Mark Esper and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Joseph Dunford, neither of whom spoke.

Trump's "nonpartisan" speech presented the military as the unifying moral force in American society. "Today, just as it did 243 years ago, the future of American freedom rests on the shoulders of men and women willing to defend it," Trump declared.

Amid his glorification of the forces conducting American imperialism's neocolonial wars, Trump also singled out for praise the "bodies of armed men" carrying out a reign of terror among immigrants. "Our nation has always honored the heroes that serve our communities, the firefighters, first responders, police, sheriffs, ICE, border patrol, and the brave men and women of law enforcement," Trump said.

Aside from Trump's praise of the police-military apparatus, the most dominant feature of the speech was the promotion of an image of American infallibility that bordered on the delirious.

"Together, we are part of one of the greatest stories ever told, the story of America. It is the epic tale of a great nation whose people have risked everything for what they know is right and what they know is true."

America, according to Trump, is the most "exceptional nation in the history of the world, and our nation is stronger today than it ever was before." The United States, he concluded, will "reign for ever and ever and ever."

It is hardly necessary to state that this picture bears no relationship with reality. The United States is a deeply unstable and declining imperialist power, staggering from crisis to crisis, and ruled by a criminal financial oligarchy. This is expressed above all by the elevation of Trump himself to the presidency.

More than a quarter century of unending war has produced disaster after disaster, with the string of neocolonial invasions and regime-change operations developing into a conflict involving major powers.

Only two weeks ago, the Trump administration came within ten minutes of launching a war against Iran, a catastrophe that could easily escalate into a massive regional war and even World War III.

The choice of venue, the front steps of the Lincoln Memorial, built in tribute to the “Great Emancipator,” was particularly obscene. Trump compounded this with his absurd attempts to present himself in the continuity of the progressive struggles for equality from American history.

Trump praised the American Revolution, one of the great liberating events of the era of bourgeois democratic revolutions, as he ignores all constitutional limits on executive power and toys with the idea of canceling the 2020 elections. He hailed the Civil War and the struggle to free the slaves from the Southern aristocracy as he presides over mass layoffs and record profits for Wall Street and the financial aristocracy.

Trump lauded the civil rights movement and Martin Luther King while he systematically denies civil rights to undocumented immigrants and seeks to promote a fascist movement in the United States (CNN reported that neo-Nazi “Proud Boys” assaulted counterdemonstrators outside of the venue).

The Democratic Party’s response to the event was predictably muted and pathetic, aimed at chloroforming public awareness of the dangers raised by the event.

“I’m not quite sure that we need money to go into put tanks in downtown Washington, DC, frankly,” presidential candidate Bernie Sanders said during a July 4th event in Iowa. Fellow candidate Pete Buttigieg said, “Reducing our nation to tanks and shows of muscle just makes us look like the kind of loud-mouth guy at the bar instead of the extremely diverse and energetic nation that we are.”

The Democrats, who waged eight years of continual warfare under Obama, are oriented no less towards the military than Trump. Over the past month, Democrats voted in Congress to give Trump the largest Pentagon budget in history as well as \$4.5 billion to fund his war against immigrants. Their tepid opposition to Trump’s military rally is based on concerns that it could provoke opposition within the American population and undermine the credibility of the military.

Throughout the Trump administration, the Democrats have focused their opposition on appeals to the military and intelligence agencies.

The threat of dictatorship does not emanate from Trump’s personal proclivities, but from the crisis of American capitalism. Faced with its historic geopolitical decline and terrified of the growth of social opposition at home, the American ruling class is increasingly moving towards dictatorship and war as a means of curing both its internal and external maladies.



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