

Operation Relentless Pursuit: Federal agents occupying a city near you

Jacob Crosse
31 December 2019

There is, we are told, “no money” for decent-paying jobs, schools or housing in the United States. Yet at a December 18 press conference, US Attorney General William Barr confirmed that there are always funds for what Friedrich Engels called the “special armed bodies” of the state.

As part of a new law-enforcement initiative, Barr announced that an additional \$71 million in federal funds will be allocated to seven US cities ahead of the 2020 presidential election.

“Operation Relentless Pursuit” will be led by the US Justice Department in close coordination with both political parties, local police departments and multiple federal agencies, including the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

The federal initiative will provide financial and logistical resources to enable closer collaboration and communication between federal agencies and their “local partners,” which include police departments, district attorneys and sheriffs. Money, equipment and federal agents will be deployed as part of a quasi-occupation of working class urban neighborhoods.

It is unclear how long the operation will last. In an interview with the *Wisconsin Examiner*, Kenneth Gales, a spokesman for the US Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of Wisconsin, confirmed that “there is no time limit.”

At his press conference, Barr stated that the seven cities were chosen for their “high violent crime rates.” However, he noted that consideration was also given to the willingness of local agencies to cooperate with federal officials. At the same press conference, DEA Administrator Uttam Dhillon emphasized that the

money will be used to target “drug traffickers, including cartels and street gangs [that] will stop at nothing to turn a profit.”

The seven cities are Albuquerque, New Mexico; Baltimore, Maryland; Cleveland, Ohio; Detroit, Michigan; Kansas City, Missouri; Memphis, Tennessee; and Milwaukee, Wisconsin. According to Barr, the funds will also be used to hire an additional 400 police officers.

FBI data released earlier this year shows that violent crimes decreased a further 3.9 percent in 2018, continuing a decades-long trend. Official figures indicate a 50 percent drop in violent crime since 1990.

Violent crimes include rape, assault, murder and robbery. The only statistic that showed an increase, for the sixth year in a row, was rape. However, this is most likely due to the FBI changing its definition of rape to include consent, as opposed to the former definition, which defined rape as forcible “carnal knowledge of a female.”

Despite the falling crime rate, US police departments have continued their deadly attacks. According to the *Washington Post*, 897 people have been killed by police departments so far this year. This may increase as more data is compiled, bringing the total of people killed by the police to more than 1,000 for the sixth year in a row.

The additional funding is being made available for policing while residents in every one of the targeted cities face deteriorating infrastructure, including lead-lined water pipes, school closings and a severe lack of affordable housing.

In Milwaukee, Democratic Mayor Tom Barrett has already allocated nearly half of the city’s available funds to the Milwaukee Police Department. The department currently has 1,804 officers, with an

estimated 2020 budget of \$298.3 million, approximately 47 percent of the entire city budget.

The only criticism from Wisconsin officials of the federal government's plan to increase the police presence in Milwaukee came from LaKeshia Myers, a Democratic member of the State Assembly. Myers did not object to the increased police funding, but to the fact that it was limited to the city of Milwaukee. She expressed the desire to see federal agents deployed throughout state, telling the *Examiner* that she hoped "the radius [of the operation] is not just limited to the city of Milwaukee."

In the southwest city of Albuquerque, out of the nearly \$1.1 billion 2020 budget, over \$205 million will be spent on the 1,043 officers in the Albuquerque Police Department. This includes \$6 million for new vehicles and \$3.7 million in "investments" in the newly created "gun intelligence center."

While the police will have the latest ballistics technology through their new gun center, more than 1,500 people in Albuquerque will be homeless tonight. In a point-in-time survey conducted by the *Albuquerque Journal*, 1,524 sheltered and unsheltered homeless people were counted in the city this past January. City officials admit that this figure is most likely a drastic undercount.

The Democratic mayor of Detroit, Mike Duggan, also saw fit to increase funding for the Detroit Police Department in the 2020 budget by an additional \$10 million, bringing the total to \$331,162,000, or over 30 percent of the city's \$1.1 billion annual budget.

These cities show that no matter which political party is in power, massive resources are provided to the armed defenders of private property. Statistics compiled in 2016 from urban.org estimated that the US collectively spent more than \$100 billion on policing and an additional \$80 billion on incarceration.

Overall state and local spending on policing and incarceration has skyrocketed in the US over the last 25 years. From 1997 to 2016, state and local spending on police and incarceration jumped from \$59 billion to \$187 billion, a 216 percent increase.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit: