

A call to the working class! Stop Trump's coup d'état!

Statement of the Socialist Equality Party
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The White House is now the political nerve center of a conspiracy to establish a military dictatorship, overthrow the Constitution, abolish democratic rights and violently suppress the protests against police brutality that have swept across the United States.

The political crisis unleashed on Monday night—when Donald Trump ordered military police to attack peaceful protesters and threatened to invoke the Insurrection Act of 1807 and deploy federal troops to states to establish martial law—is rapidly escalating.

Democracy in America is teetering on the brink of collapse. Trump's attempt to carry out a military coup is unfolding in real time.

There is no other way to interpret the sequence of events that have occurred over the past 24 hours. In a series of extraordinary public statements, high-level political and military figures leave no doubt they believe that Trump is seeking to establish a military dictatorship.

Secretary of Defense Mark Esper stated at a press conference that he opposed Trump's threat to invoke the Insurrection Act and deploy the military throughout the country. The use of active duty soldiers to patrol US cities, Esper said, should be a "last resort and only in the most urgent and dire of situations. We are not in one of those situations now."

Trump, according to an official who spoke to the *New York Times*, "was angered by Mr. Esper's remarks, and excoriated him later at the White House..." The White House press secretary, Kayleigh McEnany, indicated that Esper may soon be dismissed from the president's cabinet.

Responding to Trump's threats, Esper has reversed himself and ordered 750 soldiers from the 82nd Airborne currently in Washington DC not be sent back to Fort Bragg, as had previously been announced.

Esper's comments were followed by an extraordinary denunciation of Trump by former Marine General James Mattis, Trump's first secretary of defense. We quote Mattis' comments in some detail not because we give any political support to "mad dog Mattis," who played a leading role in the 2003 invasion of Iraq, but because he provides a blunt assessment from someone who is intimately familiar with what is happening within the military.

Mattis accused Trump of attempting to overthrow the Constitution. "When I joined the military, some 50 years ago," he writes, "I swore an oath to support and defend the Constitution.

Never did I dream that troops taking that same oath would be ordered under any circumstance to violate the Constitutional rights of their fellow citizens—much less to provide a bizarre photo op for the elected commander-in-chief, with military leadership standing alongside."

Mattis continued:

We must reject any thinking of our cities as a "battlespace" that our uniformed military is called upon to "dominate." At home, we should use our military only when requested to do so, on very rare occasions, by state governors. Militarizing our response, as we witnessed in Washington, D.C., sets up a conflict—a false conflict—between the military and civilian society. It erodes the moral ground that ensures a trusted bond between men and women in uniform and the society they are sworn to protect, and of which they themselves are a part. Keeping public order rests with civilian state and local leaders who best understand their communities and are answerable to them.

Mattis concluded his statement by implicitly comparing Trump's concept of the military to that of the Nazi regime.

Admiral Sandy Winnefeld, a retired vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, wrote in an email published in the *New York Times*: "We are at the most dangerous time for civil-military relations I've seen in my lifetime. It is especially important to reserve the use of federal forces for only the most dire circumstances that actually threaten the survival of the nation. Our senior-most military leaders need to ensure their political chain of command understands these things."

None of these military figures are devoted adherents of democracy. Their statements are motivated by fear that Trump's actions will be met with massive popular opposition, with disastrous political consequences.

"Senior Pentagon leaders," the *Times* reports, "are now so concerned about losing public support—and that of their active duty and reserve personnel, 40 percent of whom are people of color—that Gen. Mark A. Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, released a message to top military commanders on Wednesday affirming that every member of the armed forces

swears an oath to defend the Constitution, which, he said, ‘gives Americans the right to freedom of speech and peaceful assembly.’”

Statements were also released by all the living former presidents—Obama, Clinton, Bush and Carter. These statements were far more circumspect and made no explicit warning of a coup. They called for no specific action against Trump. It was far less an appeal to the people than a cautious effort to dissuade military leaders from backing Trump.

On the side of the fascistic cabal around Trump, the *Times* published a comment by Senator Tom Cotton under the headline, “Send In the Troops.” This political conspirator declared, “One thing above all else will restore order to our streets: an overwhelming show of force to disperse, detain and ultimately deter lawbreakers.” Since “delusional politicians” are refusing to do what is necessary, Cotton writes, it is necessary for Trump to invoke “the Insurrection Act [which] authorizes the president to employ the military ‘or any other means’ in ‘cases of insurrection, or obstruction to the laws.’”

The political situation is on a knife edge. Never in the history of the United States has the country been so close to a military takeover. Threatening military deployments are still underway. The *Times* reported on Wednesday night: “Despite calls for calm from senior Pentagon leaders, the troops on the ground in Washington on Wednesday night appeared to be ramping up for a more militarized show of force. National Guard units pushed solidly ahead of the police near the White House, almost becoming the public face of the security presence. They also blocked the streets with Army transport trucks and extended the perimeter against protesters.”

In the face of this unfolding political conspiracy, the Democratic party is acting with its habitual mixture of cowardice and complicity. Not a single major Democratic Party politician has openly denounced the dictatorial actions of the Trump administration. They are doing everything they can to keep the raging conflict within the state out of public view. The line from top Democrats is that Trump’s “rhetoric” is “unhelpful” and is serving to “inflame the situation.” Among the most pathetic responses to the crisis is that of Senator Bernie Sanders, who merely retweeted the statement of Mattis, to which he attached the comment: “Interesting reading.”

During the long-forgotten impeachment trial that was held in January, the Democrats insisted that it was necessary to remove Trump immediately because he had allegedly withheld military aid to the Ukraine in its conflict with Russia. They advocated the removal of Trump because he was seen as insufficiently aggressive in his relations with Russia.

But now, when Trump is attempting to carry out a military coup and the overthrow of constitutional rule in the United States, the Democrats offer no serious opposition to Trump, let alone demand that he be removed from office. When it is a matter of upholding the global interests of American imperialism, the Democratic leaders are full of fire and brimstone. But when confronted with the direct threat of dictatorship, they are meek as church mice.

Underlying their cowardice are basic class interests. Whatever their tactical differences with Trump, the Democrats represent the

same class interests. What they fear more than anything else is that opposition to Trump may assume revolutionary dimensions that threaten the interests of the capitalist financial-corporate oligarchy.

The target of the conspiracy in the White House is the working class. The corporate-financial oligarchy is terrified that the eruption of mass demonstrations against police violence will intersect with the immense social anger among workers over social inequality, which has been enormously intensified as a result of the ruling class response to the coronavirus pandemic and the homicidal back-to-work campaign.

Nothing could be more dangerous than to think that the crisis has passed. It has, rather, just begun. The working class must intervene in this unprecedented crisis as an independent social and political force. It must oppose the conspiracy in the White House through the methods of class struggle and socialist revolution.

The demonstrations that have taken place during the past week rank among the most significant events in American history. In every region and state, tens and hundreds of thousands of working people and youth, in an extraordinary display of multi-racial and multi-ethnic unity and solidarity, have taken to the streets to oppose the institutionalized racism and brutality of the police. The South—the old bastion of the Confederacy, Jim Crow laws and lynch mobs—has been the scene of some of the largest of the demonstrations. The protesters are giving voice to the deep-rooted democratic and egalitarian sentiments that are the noble heritage of the great American Revolution of the eighteenth century and the Civil War of the nineteenth century.

The only viable answer to the criminal conspiracy being hatched in the White House is to raise the demand for the removal of Trump, Pence and their conspirators from office.

This can be achieved only through the intervention of the working class, which should join the protest demonstrations *en masse* and initiate a nationwide political strike.

No to dictatorship!

Trump and Pence must go!

The Socialist Equality Party and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality Party call on all readers of the *World Socialist Web Site* to become active in this fight.



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