# Trump orders hundreds of federal agents into Chicago

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In a further escalation of his drive toward authoritarian rule, President Donald Trump has ordered hundreds of federal agents into the cities of Chicago, Illinois and Albuquerque, New Mexico. The executive order was announced at a media event held at the White House on Tuesday afternoon presided over by Trump and Attorney General William Barr.

Two hundred federal agents have already been deployed in Kansas City, Missouri as part of Operation LeGend, named after a four-year-old boy, LeGend Taliferro, killed in that city last month. Two hundred more are now being dispatched to Chicago and 35 to Albuquerque. In addition, the administration is sending $61 million to the three cities to hire more local police.

Trump presented the deployment of federal agents as an effort to save the minority populations of those cities, where the rates of gun crime and homicide have soared over the past year. In an effort to use the victims of such crimes as political props, his political aides recruited a number of parents of children killed in street violence to attend the event so Trump could point them out and have them take a bow.

The cynicism and callousness of this effort cannot be overstated. Trump recited the figures for deaths and injuries caused by gun violence in Chicago, a social tragedy to which he is completely indifferent except insofar as he can exploit it for reactionary political purposes.

"No mother should ever have to cradle her dead child in her arms simply because politicians refuse to do what is necessary to secure their neighborhood and to secure their city," Trump declared, trying unsuccessfully to manufacture a display of empathy.

Trump has never expressed the slightest feeling for those whose children were murdered by American police. One of his earliest overtly political interventions was to demand the execution of the Central Park Five, minority youth framed up in Manhattan for a crime they did not commit and later completely exonerated.

In his remarks Wednesday, Trump made a thoroughly dishonest amalgam between the conditions in Chicago, where more than a hundred people have died in gun violence this month, and in Portland, Oregon, where heavily armed federal officers drawn from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) have been deployed on the streets against supposed "anarchist mobs"—actually protesters against police violence, nearly all of them peaceful.

He blamed both phenomena on his political opponents within the US ruling elite, claiming that unnamed politicians, obviously Democrats, "have now embraced the far-left movement to break up our police departments, causing violent crime in their cities to spiral—and I mean spiral seriously out of control."

The occupant of the Oval Office is a liar, and not a skillful one, despite constant practice. No police department has been defunded, let alone broken up, nor do any Democratic politicians advocate such measures. They defend the capitalist state machinery of repression just as much as Trump and the Republicans.

The wave of bloodshed in Chicago cannot be attributed to any "softness" on the part of the police there. On the contrary, Chicago under decades of Democratic Party rule has become a byword for police brutality, torture and murder. The current mayor, Lori Lightfoot, owes her political rise to her work in whitewashing police killings under the previous mayor, Rahm Emanuel.

As the WSWS noted recently, in exposing the law-and-order policies of Lightfoot:

While the political right wing has long attempted to portray the city of Chicago as chaotic and lawless, the violence tends to be centered in deeply impoverished neighborhoods that have the most gang activity. These are neighborhoods that have been hit hardest by

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deindustrialization and the closure of schools, mental health facilities and other social services—policies carried out by the city's Democratic Party machine in the service of corporate interests.

The upsurge in bloodshed in recent years is a manifestation of the social decay of the capitalist system as a whole, for which both capitalist parties share responsibility.

Trump's reelection campaign has spent $20 million on a torrent of digital ads linking the events in Portland and Chicago. "Dangerous MOBS of far-left groups are running through our streets and causing absolute mayhem," one ad screams. "They are DESTROYING our cities and rioting."

In Chicago, as Mayor Lightfoot emphasized in a statement yesterday accepting the "assistance" of the Trump administration, the influx of federal agents will be employed behind the scenes, not on the city's streets, and they will be under the direction of the US attorney for the region, not of the Department of Homeland Security.

In other words, the Democratic Party-controlled local and state governments will remain in the driver's seat for the escalation of police repression in Chicago and Illinois, even as Trump seeks to set a precedent for a greater role for the federal government.

In Portland, however, the situation is different. The local police have been largely supplanted in the downtown area by federal forces based in a federal office building and the federal courthouse two blocks away.

At a court hearing Wednesday, Oregon state officials sought an injunction from a federal judge forbidding the federal agents from making arrests without probable cause and without identifying themselves. State Attorney General Ellen Rosenbloom denounced what she called "unconstitutional police state-type tactics" by the DHS.

Documents made public in conjunction with these court proceedings show that the DHS has deployed 114 agents of a previously secret body called the Rapid Deployment Force, drawn from Customs and Border Protection, Immigration and Customs Enforcement and other sub-units of the giant department.

The carefully planned operation in Portland was given the military-style codename Operation Diligent Valor and began on July 4, with agents deployed inside the two federal buildings looking for the opportunity, which finally presented itself on July 17-18, to make a sortie against protesters on the downtown streets. Agents wore camouflage-style military uniforms and badges embossed with the word "police," but no name tags and nothing to identify their agency or unit. They used unmarked vehicles and detained people without probable cause.

At a Senate committee hearing Wednesday, Senator Ron Wyden of Oregon warned of the precedent being set in Portland. "If the line is not drawn in the sand right now," he said, "America may be staring down the barrel of martial law in the middle of a presidential election."

The Republican former governor of Pennsylvania Tom Ridge, the first secretary of homeland security in the administration of George W. Bush, told a radio interviewer that "the DHS was not established to be the president's personal militia."

But the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee, former Vice President Joe Biden, issued a statement that made no reference either to the threat to democracy or Trump's effort to transform the DHS into a paramilitary force at his disposal.

"Of course, the US government has the right and duty to protect federal property," he declared. "The Obama-Biden administration protected federal property across the country without resorting to these egregious tactics—and without trying to stoke the fires of division in this country. We need a president who will bring us together instead of tear us apart, calm instead of inflame, and enforce the law faithfully rather than put his political interests first."

As for Bernie Sanders, the "democratic socialist" turned water boy for the Biden campaign issued a letter to supporters warning that Trump's actions were "what a police state is all about." But his only remedy, besides voting for Biden on November 3, was to introduce legislation to "greatly curtail the activities of federal military forces in our communities."

Such legislation would, of course, not pass the Republican Senate, and even if it somehow did, it would then be subject to veto by Trump—its nominal target. Sanders seeks to divert his remaining supporters from taking any action to oppose the moves toward dictatorship in favor of another useless appeal to the capitalist political establishment.

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