Illinois Democrats embrace Trump's law enforcement "surge"

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On Wednesday, the Democratic mayor of Chicago, Lori Lightfoot, announced that she had reached an agreement with President Donald Trump to send a "surge" of some 200 federal agents to Chicago. Addressing concerns that this would result in paramilitaries patrolling the streets, the mayor issued a statement maintaining "that all resources will be investigatory in nature and be coordinated through the US Attorney's office."

Earlier on Wednesday, Trump announced an expansion of his plan, dubbed "Operation Legend," to deploy federal police to cities across the country, ostensibly to fight gun violence. He said he would send federal agents to Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, Milwaukee and Albuquerque to support existing law enforcement efforts.

That night, in Portland, Oregon, camouflage-clad members of the Customs and Border Protection's "Rapid Deployment Force" again used tear gas against demonstrators outside the Hatfield Federal Courthouse, including Portland's Democratic mayor Ted Wheeler, who himself had previously ordered police to tear-gas protesters.

On Thursday, Homeland Security sent a similar "Special Response Team" to Seattle, Washington; it remains on standby and has not yet been deployed.

These deployments are part of the Trump administration's moves towards dictatorial rule. Attorney General William Barr had already sent agents from the FBI, the US Marshals Service, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and the Drug Enforcement Agency to beef up state and local law enforcement in Kansas City, Missouri.

The Justice Department's John Lausch, currently US Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois, is reported to have brokered the deal between Trump and Lightfoot, who initially postured as an opponent of the "surge." *Crain's* reports that Lausch "assured her that, despite media reports, the surge would be not unilateral but cooperative, with agents working with the chain of command in their normal units—the FBI, the US Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives, US Border Patrol, etc.—and in coordination with local authorities. Just like it had in other instances in the past."

On Wednesday night, some 1,000 protesters gathered near Lightfoot's home in the north side neighborhood of Logan Square. Led by Black Lives Matter and Good Kids Mad City, an anti-gun violence activist organization, protesters opposed the plan to bring hundreds of federal law enforcement agents to Chicago and called for defunding the police.

Illinois Democratic lawmakers have made public statements aimed at assuaging public fears that the federal forces will crack down on anti-police violence protesters in Chicago, just as they have in Portland.

Tensions are escalating as both corporate-controlled parties collaborate in attempting to quell opposition provoked by the catastrophic mismanagement of the coronavirus pandemic, the homicidal back-to-work campaign, the cutting off of extended unemployment benefits and the ending of moratoria on evictions.

In an effort to assuage popular anger over the deal to bring federal police into the city, Lightfoot said, "If there is any deviation from what has been announced, we will pursue all available legal options to protect Chicagoans."

Illinois senators Dick Durbin and Tammy Duckworth issued a joint statement of approval. "After needless threats from the president, we're relieved the Trump administration says they plan to work with local officials and authorities in Chicago rather than undermine local law enforcement and endanger our civil rights," they wrote.

Democratic Representative Jan Schakowsky said legislators were assured on a conference call, "…we're not going to see these agents in the street."

These statements are not expressions of gullibility.

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Those making them have no genuine concern for civil and democratic rights. Rather, they are worried that the fascistic provocations of the Trump administration will spark an eruption of social opposition that will spiral out of control.

Growing economic desperation has increased already high levels of gang activity in the city.

This, in turn, has resulted in a sharp rise in gun violence and mass shootings this year, centered mainly in the South and West Side neighborhoods, which have been battered by deindustrialization and the austerity policies of successive Democratic mayoral administrations and Republican and Democratic state leaderships.

Conflicts between numerous rival gangs are responsible for the bulk of the more than 330 shooting deaths in Chicago in 2020, nine of which have been of children. The funerals of those killed are being targeted by shooters. Fifteen were shot earlier this week outside of an Auburn Gresham funeral home, where services for a shooting victim had taken place.

Epidemic levels of gun violence in Chicago are a direct consequence of decades of pro-business political rule by the Democratic Party. The closure of hundreds of schools, factories and social service providers since the start of the 21st century has cut a large section of the young working class population out of the formal economy and increased social desperation and misery to such a degree that the majority of young black men under 25 in Chicago are neither in school or working.

While the gang violence is the ostensible target of the Trump-Lightfoot "surge," the building up of a police state apparatus in the country's third largest city is aimed at suppressing the social anger over historic levels of inequality and state violence. The ruling elite and both of its political parties fear the emergence of mass strikes and protests by workers in opposition to the bipartisan back-to-work drive.

The "surge" in federal law enforcement being jointly implemented by the Trump administration and leading Democrats in Illinois must be taken as a sharp warning to the working class.

The Democrats' relentless promotion of race and gender politics is aimed at splitting the working class and concealing the basic class divisions in society and the bankruptcy of the capitalist system. In remarks to the media earlier this week, Lightfoot made the ridiculous suggestion that Trump was sending law enforcement into cities because the mayors are women.

Early Friday morning, Lightfoot issued an order to remove two statues of Christopher Columbus. Grant Park's Columbus statue was the site of recent protests, where teen activist Miracle Boyd had several of her teeth broken when a Chicago police officer assaulted her. The Grant Park statue of Columbus was unpopular from the time of its installation. Erected during the 1933 World's Fair, it was lauded in a letter from Italian fascist dictator Benito Mussolini, who wrote "Italy, rejuvenated by Fascism, is happy to join in the celebration."

Initially having opposed removing the statue, Lightfoot issued a public statement indicating its removal was a public safety and police resource issue: "It comes in response to demonstrations that became unsafe for both protesters and police, as well as efforts by individuals to independently pull the Grant Park statue down in an extremely dangerous manner. This step is about an effort to protect public safety and to preserve a safe space for an inclusive and democratic public dialogue about our city's symbols. In addition, our public safety resources must be concentrated where they are most needed throughout the city, and particularly in our South and West Side communities."

City Council members representing the Democratic Socialists of America lauded Lightfoot's decision to remove the two statues. DSA Alderwoman Rossana Rodriguez Sanchez attempted to portray the bringing down of the statue as a victory, even as Lightfoot embraced Trump's deployment of federal law enforcement to the city. "It's coming down because of the activism that has led to this moment," she said. "Indigenous, Black and Brown people have been fighting for so long to see this happen. It's also a balancing act; the mayor just accepted Federal Agents from Trump."

No warnings have been issued to the working class of the immense dangers from the Democrats' collaboration with Trump by these bourgeois politicians masquerading as socialists, while functioning as an arm of the Democratic Party.

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