

AMLO transfers National Guard to military in a threat against Mexican working class

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Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, known as AMLO, announced last week that he will attempt to change the Constitution to bring the country's National Guard under the control of the military. He also plans to extend the domestic deployment of the Army and Navy beyond the 2024 limit he decreed in 2020.

These maneuvers are preparations to establish a military dictatorship and crush the imminent eruption of working class struggles against inequality and capitalist exploitation.

Having lost his absolute majority in Congress last year—itsself a sign of growing opposition—AMLO says he will impose the change by presidential decree and arrogantly discounted any potential challenge before the Supreme Court, where several recent challenges to policing by the military have simply languished.

“I think the best thing is for the National Guard to be a branch of the Defense Ministry to give it stability over time and prevent it from being corrupted,” he said in a press conference on August 9. “Human rights are respected now,” he added, “there are no torture or massacres anymore.”

A few hours later, attacks broke out in Guadalajara reportedly by drug cartel members, who blocked streets, shot their guns randomly, and burned vehicles, OXXO supermarkets and other buildings. Similar events erupted in Ciudad Juárez two days later, killing 11 people, and again the following day in Tijuana and Mexicali.

Anabel Hernández, a journalist exiled in Germany who specializes on the ties between drug cartels and the state, reported to Deutsche Welle that a source close to the Presidency said the events were staged: “It is about creating an illness to then offer the medicine.”

AMLO's earlier promise to send the military to the

barracks, which was then inseparable from his purported opposition to corruption, was a major, if not the main, reason he was elected. But after coming to power, his administration created the National Guard as a body almost entirely comprised of former Army and Navy soldiers and enshrined it in the constitution as a “civilian institution” under the Public Security Ministry.

Whether it has been through military deployment, unprecedented tax cuts for corporations along the US-Mexico border, the lifting of all restrictions to the spread of COVID-19, and numerous other policies, AMLO has unreservedly worked to fulfill the main political and economic needs of Wall Street, US imperialism and its partners in the national bourgeoisie. Mexico's position in global capitalism as a source of cheap labor for key industrial products is at the core of all his policies, but this question has been entirely missing in the corporate media.

The COVID-19 pandemic has left 673,000 excess deaths and plunged millions into poverty in Mexico, increasing the official poverty rate to 44 percent. Now, workers are seeing the biggest drops in real wages since at least the 2001 crisis. As of February, the annual increase in the cost of the basic food basket increased 13.9 percent, while wages have only increased on average 5 percent. Meanwhile, Mexico's dollar billionaires increased their net worth by 31 percent in 2021.

The combination of growing inequality, the massive drop in living standards, and the ongoing mass death and sickness from new COVID-19 variants threatens to provoke a social eruption like that in Sri Lanka. However, to continue these attacks against workers, AMLO is consolidating a garrison state and establishing an authoritarian precedent of ruling by

decree and through the barrel of a gun as part of the preparations of the ruling elite for a dictatorship to suppress the class struggle.

At the same time, AMLO's armed forces have continued acting as frontline troops for the U.S. Border Patrol, with Mexico reaching an all-time record of migrant apprehensions in 2021.

For its part, the Biden administration hosted the first U.S.-Mexico High-Level Security Dialogue in five years last October. This resulted in a "Bicentennial Framework for Security, Public Health and Safe Communities" and the Congressional approval of \$158.9 million in military assistance to Mexico as part of the Merida Initiative, the highest since 2013.

US imperialism and the local elite have historically groomed the Mexican military and police to crush social opposition. The prominence of the military eventually fell after the Mexican Revolution until the global resurgence of the class struggle in 1968, when the military was placed front and center to crush mass demonstrations and guerrilla movements. This included the Tlatelolco massacre in October 1968 of several hundred demonstrators in Mexico City.

In tandem with the growth of the industrial workforce in Mexico, the military grew from 60,000 to 453,000 troops between 1973 and 2022, including the 114,000-strong National Guard. The police grew to 385,000 officers.

Meanwhile, killings associated with organized crime continued to increase and reached a record high under AMLO of nearly 25,000 homicides per year. In total, an estimated 350,000 people have been killed and 95,000 more have gone missing in the so-called "war on drugs" since 2006.

Confirming their subservience to imperialism, Jacobin Magazine has promoted AMLO for his "migrant protection strategy" and "pro-poor politics." As recently as April, this publication tied to the Democratic Socialists of America denounced all claims of an authoritarian turn by AMLO and insisted that "Obrador's program" is that "the state must aspire to become a lever for social progress, taking charge of economic inequalities and developing institutions for this purpose."

However, AMLO has shown his true colors time and again. Most starkly, he joined Brazil's fascist President Jair Bolsonaro in waiting six weeks before

recognizing Joe Biden's clear electoral victory in 2020, backing in this way Donald Trump's attempt to establish himself as a fascist dictator. As the WSWS wrote at the time, AMLO "sees in a Trump coup a potential impetus to move more swiftly toward authoritarian forms of rule in Mexico, as the country's social crisis is exacerbated by the pandemic and stark levels of inequality."

The Inter-disciplinary Group of Independent Experts on the disappearance of the 43 Ayotzinapa teaching students in 2014 concluded that the military and police collaborated with gangs to kidnap and massacre the students as they were traveling to a demonstration. Moreover, the Navy tampered with evidence; "all information was obtained through torture" by the Ministry of Defense; and their arrest warrants were "falsified." Twenty key witnesses, including several suspects, have been murdered. Despite all of this, the AMLO administration has not charged a single military official.

His government released the son of Chapo Guzmán, the former leader of the Sinaloa Cartel, in 2019 after capturing him. In March 2020, AMLO greeted and held the hand of Chapo's mother Consuelo Loera. Anabel Hernández also reported that sources close to AMLO say he is aware and approves of the alliance between Morena officials like the Sinaloa governor Rubén Rocha Moya, the Tamaulipas governor-elect Américo Villareal and several mayors with the Sinaloa Cartel.

In November 2020, AMLO pressured the US to release former Defense Minister Salvador Cienfuegos, despite clear evidence that he was being paid to protect and directly facilitate drug shipments. Once the Trump administration dropped the charges and returned Cienfuegos to Mexico, AMLO exonerated him.



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