

Seeking to “out-fascist” Trump

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis campaigns on “shoot on sight” anti-immigrant policy

Jacob Crosse
30 June 2023

This past Monday, Florida Republican Governor Ron DeSantis said that should he become president, the “rules of engagement” for law enforcement and military elements deployed to the US-Mexico border would be revised to allow them to use “deadly force” if they suspect “hostile intent.”

While former President Donald Trump has boasted that he will embark on the “largest deportation operation in history” if elected again, DeSantis is the first Republican presidential candidate to claim that he will empower border police to shoot non-violent immigrants crossing the border.

Speaking to a small group of Republican voters in Eagle Pass, Texas, DeSantis said, “You spend all this money on [the border wall], and you just let them cut through with impunity? I think you need adequate rules of engagement... I say use force to repel them. You do that one time, they will never do it again.”

Seeking to outflank Trump to the right with his anti-immigration policies, DeSantis, who is trailing the ex-president by some 30 points in the latest Republican presidential primary polling, claimed that as president he would designate Mexican cartels either “transnational criminal organizations” or “foreign terrorist organization.”

As part of his “No Excuses” anti-immigrant program, DeSantis said he would create a “Joint Counter-Cartel Task Force” that would allow the US government to deploy military and intelligence assets along the border, and into Mexico as part of an expansion of the “war on terror.”

“We are going to use a designation that is going to pack a punch,” DeSantis added. Selling himself to the ruling class as a more competent fascist dictator

compared to Trump, DeSantis hissed, “For the president to battle against the cartels, you don’t even need Congress.”

Threatening a war with Mexico, DeSantis’ said that his administration would “reserve the right to operate across the border,” including “surging resources to the Navy and Coast Guard” to block Mexican ports.

DeSantis pledged that as president he would “boost recruiting” to Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Customs and Border Protection by increasing pay and embarking on a recruitment campaign targeting “former military members and police officers.”

Sparing no expense for the war on immigrants, DeSantis added that he would finish the border wall and install new “fiber optic security systems, lighting and sensors.”

And as is the case with virtually every Republican candidate for president, DeSantis pledged to overturn the 14th Amendment provision that guarantees citizenship for every person born in America.

In a follow-up press conference, DeSantis, flanked by far-right Texas Representative Chip Roy, reiterated his pledge to adopt an aggressive “use of force” policy on the border. Copying Trump, DeSantis claimed that “millions and millions of illegal aliens” were “pouring” into the country including “guys with backpacks,” who, he claimed, were universally drug runners for cartels.

“If the cartels are cutting through the border wall, trying to run product into this country, they are going to end up stone cold dead as a result of that bad decision,” he said, adding that “if you do that one time, you are not going to see them mess with that wall ever again.”

Questioned by a reporter whether an attempt to cut

through or circumvent the border wall was a justifiable reason for shooting and killing the perpetrator, DeSantis doubled down: “If someone is breaking through the border wall... demonstrating hostile intent or hostile action, you have to be able to meet that with the appropriate use of force. I don’t see how you can just let them do that.”

Pressed by the reporter, an agitated DeSantis cut him off, insisting, “Of course, of course, you use deadly force.” He continued, “I tell you, if you drop a couple of these cartel operatives trying to do that, you are not going to have to worry about that anymore.”

More than three days after DeSantis’s pledge to turn the US-Mexico border into a war zone, neither President Joe Biden nor any other leading Democratic official, such as New York Representative Alexandria Ocasio Cortez, has denounced him.

The Democratic Party’s silence on Republican threats to empower border agents and military personnel to execute immigrants is not a mistake. As DeSantis noted at the same press conference, under Democratic President Barack Obama, the US federal government deported more immigrants than under Trump. And while he campaigned on a more humane border policy, Biden, like Trump, used the COVID-19 pandemic as a pretext to deport thousands of immigrants and asylum seekers up until this year.

Continuing to attack Trump from the right on immigration, DeSantis explained on Monday, “Where we differ... we are more aggressive in terms of our plan than anything he [referring to Trump] did in empowering local officials to enforce immigration law.”

This is the second time in the last month the Florida governor has visited a state along the US-Mexico border. In a bid to boost his anti-immigrant bona fides, earlier this month DeSantis traveled to Sierra Vista, Arizona, along with several fascistic sheriffs who have endorsed his campaign.

Less than two weeks after his Arizona visit, 91 far-right sheriffs, including several who appeared with DeSantis in Arizona, such as Mark Dannels (Cochise County, Arizona), Corey Helton (Lea County, New Mexico) and Grady Judd (Polk County, Florida) announced that they were forming an anti-immigrant coalition to combat “the Biden border crisis,” under the “leadership” of DeSantis.

In addition to the aforementioned, several sheriffs with connections to the Oath Keepers militia group, such as Riverside County (California) Sheriff Chad Bianco, have signed onto the letter.

According to extremism researcher Kris Goldsmith, at least 13 signatories to DeSantis’ letter are members of the Constitutional Sheriffs and Peace Officers Association (CSPOA). Members of CSPOA spearheaded ruling class efforts to roll back limited mitigation measures during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and enjoy close relations with far-right militia groups, including those convicted in the assassination plot against Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact