

Democrats spearhead military-police crackdown in New York City

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The mobilization of 2,000 city and state police and National Guard troops in New York City, on the pretext of fighting crime in the vast subway system, is a demonstration of the reactionary character of the Democratic Party and its embrace of the same attacks on democratic rights and the working class as those spearheaded by Trump and the Republicans.

Last month, New York City's Democratic Mayor Eric Adams announced he would deploy 1,000 NYPD cops in the subway system, after a law-and-order campaign by the city's tabloids, sensationalizing a handful of violent attacks against subway riders and transit workers.

On Wednesday, New York Governor Kathy Hochul, also a Democrat, announced she was redeploying 750 National Guard troops already in New York City, as well as 250 state troopers and police of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), the state agency that runs the subways, to increase the number of uniformed personnel patrolling subway stations and riding trains.

The troops are currently operating out of Fort Hamilton in Brooklyn as part of Joint Task Force Empire Shield, set up nearly a quarter-century ago, after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. They regularly patrol in Grand Central Station, the Port Authority and a few other transportation hubs, wearing camouflage uniforms and equipped with automatic rifles, but not engaging with the population. Now the soldiers will take on the role of supplementing the NYPD, helping with random searches of bags and backpacks and other police activity. They will also move deeper into the subway system, appearing at more of its 472 stations and riding trains.

Hochul announced other repressive measures, including the installation of cameras in every subway car and in the cabs used by drivers and conductors. The Democrats in the state legislature will introduce a bill to bar anyone convicted of a crime of violence on the subways from using the transit system for three years—effectively barring

them from living and working in the city, where only the wealthy and the upper-middle class can go about their daily lives without riding the subway.

Statistics collected in recent years show that the campaign to whip up fears of violence on the subways has no basis in fact. NYPD figures showed a 2.6 percent decrease in subway crime in 2023, compared to 2022, although there was a jump in January 2024 compared to the same month last year. According to separate analyses by the MTA and the *New York Times*, violent crimes occur at a rate of between one and two per million subway rides.

But a few violent incidents—the knifing of a subway driver, the shooting of a passenger in Brooklyn—have been sensationalized by the media and capitalist politicians of both parties.

Mayor Adams has sought to follow Donald Trump's lead by asserting a connection between immigration and crime. Last month he proposed to weaken New York City's declared status as a “sanctuary city” and resume turning over migrants arrested for violent crimes—but not tried or convicted—to Immigration and Customs Enforcement, which would detain and deport them.

Hochul did not conceal the right-wing political motives behind her announcement of the troop redeployment. “I’m also going to demonstrate that Democrats fight crime as well,” she told MSNBC on Thursday. “This narrative that Republicans have said and hijacked the story that we’re soft on crime, that we defund the police. No.” Those who objected to a random bag check had a choice, she said. “They can refuse. We can refuse them. They can walk.”

Civil liberties and civil rights groups have warned that the new policy announcements by Adams and Hochul threaten the revival of the hated “stop and frisk” policy of former Mayor Rudy Giuliani, now one of Trump's most fervent supporters and a co-defendant on felony charges

related to Trump's efforts to overturn the 2020 election.

The New York Civil Liberties Union said Hochul was "ripping a page straight out of the Giuliani playbook." It continued: "Today's announcement fails to address longstanding problems of homelessness, poverty, or access to mental health care." Instead, "a sweeping surveillance state" was being established.

The Democrats in New York are following the example of President Biden, who last month traveled to the US-Mexico border to show his agreement with the Republicans that desperate migrants represent a major threat to the United States and that more repressive measures are needed at the border, directed against people fleeing to escape poverty and oppression, many of them entire families, including children.

Since then, Biden has regularly denounced congressional Republicans for blocking legislation that would crack down savagely on migrants, including hiring thousands more Border Patrol officers as well as immigration court judges, restricting asylum claims and authorizing swifter deportations, regardless of what fate the migrants would suffer if forcibly returned to the countries they have fled.

Biden has attacked Trump from the right, blaming him for making the border crisis worse, since the ex-president called on House Republicans to block the bipartisan immigration bill after it had passed the Senate.

The *New York Times*, mouthpiece of the Democratic Party, backed the decision to bring the National Guard into a law enforcement role on the subways. In a commentary on the newspaper's website, Mara Gay, a member of its editorial board, wrote that Hochul's action "is the right one." She added, "If Hochul's deployment of state officers can provide even some psychological comfort, nudging additional riders back to the subways, it could help the system become safer."

The trade union bureaucracy is on board as well. Transport Workers Union Local 100, with more than 30,000 members working for the MTA, has long opposed cameras in drivers' cabs because they would be used by management to spy on drivers and conductors. But in response to Hochul's plan to put cameras in every cab, the union reportedly said that it would "support the installation so long as the cameras are solely for safety purposes and are not used to support disciplinary cases against union members." Drivers and conductors will pay the price for this cynical cave-in.

The example of New York refutes Biden's claim that he and the Democrats are fighting against the threat to

American democracy represented by Donald Trump. While the likely Republican presidential nominee represents the most obvious and blatant threat of dictatorship, the Democratic Party is no alternative.

One of the key episodes in Trump's preparation of his attempted political coup of January 6, 2021 was his threat to invoke the Insurrection Act during the summer of 2020 and send the military into major American cities to suppress popular demonstrations against police violence sparked by the murder of George Floyd. Now a Democratic governor is deploying troops in the largest American city on an equally bogus pretext.

As Biden made clear in his State of the Union address (to which the WSWs will respond tomorrow) the Democratic Party program centers on war, pouring in weapons to fight Russia in Ukraine, backing Israeli genocide in Gaza in preparation for war with Iran, and pursuing a massive military build-up in the Asia-Pacific region directed against China. This aggressive and militaristic enterprise is aimed at maintaining the global domination of American imperialism.

The cost will be imposed on the working class, through the destruction of social benefits, jobs and living standards. It is impossible for the US ruling elite to carry out this policy democratically. It requires a frontal assault on the democratic rights of the working class and the build-up of the repressive forces of the capitalist state.

What is happening now in New York City is evidence that Trump and Biden merely represent different routes to the same anti-democratic destination. The defense of jobs, living standards and democratic rights requires the independent political, social and industrial struggle by the working class.



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