

Flanked by soldiers, Texas Gov. Abbott opens sprawling anti-immigrant military base

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On Friday, May 31, Texas Governor Greg Abbott unveiled a new 80-acre anti-migrant Army National Guard base in Eagle Pass, Texas. Invoking the name used to describe US military outposts established in Afghanistan and Iraq during the “Global War on Terror,” Abbott has dubbed the military installation “Forward Operating Base Eagle.”

The base is expected to house up to 1,800 Texas National Guard soldiers, although, as Abbott explained when he announced the construction of the base this past February, accommodations can be made to house an additional 500 troops if there are “surge needs.” The sprawling military encampment could cost taxpayers as much as \$400 million by September 2026, according to a recent report by the *Austin American-Statesman*.

The *Washington Post* reported that the initial contract for the construction of the base was awarded to a Texas company, Team Housing Solutions, for “a price of about \$131 million.” The base is part of the \$11 billion Operation Lone Star initiative, a reactionary anti-immigrant campaign spearheaded by Texas Republicans and Abbott shortly after President Joe Biden was elected.

The commander of the Texas Military Department, Major General Thomas Suelzer, confirmed that the base would include command posts, an armory, a helicopter pad and vehicle maintenance hubs.

In a tour of the base before Friday’s press conference, Abbott and Suelzer led a gaggle of reporters around the newly built, air conditioned facilities. At one point, a chef explained to Abbott that the cafeteria included a “carving station” with “live action chopping, cutting stuff, served to order.”

The base has a gym, an in-ground pool, a library, laundry facilities, wireless internet and on-site medical services.

Speaking at the press conference at “FOB Eagle” in

front of dozens of soldiers, Humvees and a Blackhawk helicopter, Abbott thanked Gen. Suelzer for “waging an unprecedented effort to secure our border.”

Abbott explained that the initial billeting of 300 soldiers represented “phase one” of the project. “Phase two,” Abbott said, would be completed in two weeks, when another 300 soldiers moved into the anti-migrant military camp. Abbott explained that the “process will continue all the way until November, when we have this entire area with soldiers, which, at that time, can house up to at least 1,700 soldiers, with capability of increasing that on an as-needed basis.”

Abbott said the expansive scale of the complex and its various amenities were needed because the soldiers stationed there would need to “have the highest quality mental capacity to go do battle every single day against those who are entering our state illegally.”

Speaking alongside Abbott, General Suelzer said the camp was a “six phase” operation. He said each phase would involve the addition of 300 troops and the overall process would end with the construction of 92 buildings.

Suelzer explained that the base would soon house “Joint Task Force Headquarters” and a “maintenance hub,” as well as “logistical hubs.” Soldiers would be engaged in “13 projects” along the US-Mexico border. The general added that the base had “impressive fencing with razor wire” and featured “camera and light systems.”

While scant resources are made available to fix crumbling infrastructure or provide social services for the working class, what Suelzer described as “essentially a farm” has been rapidly transformed into land that has been “tilled and rolled,” in the general’s words.

Suelzer boasted that “all this gravel has been put down, sewer, water ... a fire hydrant system.” He confirmed that every soldier would have their own room, while higher ranking staff would have rooms that featured “a larger

bed, a kitchenette, a shower and a bathroom.”

Suelzer thanked Abbott personally for his “leadership” and “relentless efforts to secure our border.” Abbott likewise extended his appreciation to Suelzer in the face of “Biden’s open border policies.”

Abbott’s absurd characterization came just days before Biden announced a sweeping executive order utilizing the same presidential authority invoked in 2017 by Trump and his Hitler-loving adviser Stephen Miller to block migrants along the southern border and coasts from claiming asylum. As of 12:01 a.m. Wednesday, June 5, a quota system for asylum seekers is in place along with new barriers for “credible fear” claims aimed at severely restricting immigration.

Biden’s executive order bans asylum claims between ports of entry if, on average, more than 2,500 migrants a day seek to enter the US to make such claims, a number well below the current daily level of about 4,000.

Even prior to issuing his de facto denial of the right to asylum, Biden had adopted virtually all of Trump’s anti-immigrant policies, despite having campaigned for election on a promise to protect migrants’ rights and democratic rights more broadly. Biden used the COVID-19 pandemic as the pretext for invoking the health emergency authority under Title 42 to summarily deport refugees seeking to cross the southern US border.

The *Washington Post* reported earlier this year that Biden “ended up expelling five times more” people than Trump. The Democratic president also circumvented environmental and tribal laws to resume construction of Trump’s border wall through wildlife preserves.

Since declaring—prematurely and recklessly—an end to the pandemic health emergency and lifting Title 42, Biden’s border guards have deported over half a million people. He is working closely with the Mexican government, under President Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) and his soon-to-be inaugurated successor, Claudia Sheinbaum, to block migrants from reaching the US southern border—a version of Trump’s “Remain in Mexico” policy.

Instead of defending democratic rights in opposition to Trump-aligned Republicans like Abbott, Biden has placated and appeased them. The new anti-migrant military base is about six miles south of Shelby Park, a recreational plaza along the Rio Grande that state military forces loyal to Abbott seized this past January from federal Customs and Border Protection agents. The

federal agents had been using the park and its boat launch as a staging ground for operations to rescue migrants drowning in the treacherous river.

After the Texas National Guard seized the park from the Border Patrol, the Biden administration sued the state of Texas. When the Supreme Court ruled that Border Patrol agents could remove razor wire installed by Abbott-controlled National Guard forces, the Texas governor ordered more razor wire installed and expanded the state military forces in the park, which Biden has meekly allowed.

Abbott’s flagrantly illegal and unconstitutional usurpation of federal authority over the border has gone essentially unopposed by Biden and the Democrats. The opening of the new, massive state military base along the border is a further right-wing assertion of “states’ rights” by a state government that has authorized a referendum on Texas’ right to secede from the United States.

Speaking on Friday, Abbott boasted:

One thing that the National Guard and Texas Military Department have done prolifically, in addition to the state building its own border wall, what the National Guard have done, they have built more than 100 miles of razor wire border barrier, anti-climb barrier and other barriers.

Abbott declared that the razor wire and barriers put the National Guard in a position to “repel and turn back people” who are trying to cross into the United States.



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