

Ford targets historic Rouge complex for police raid with complicity of UAW officials

Tim Rivers, Jerry White
26 February 2025

The International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees and Autoworkers Network of Rank-and-File Committees is hosting a meeting Sunday at 3pm Eastern to demand an end to Ford's police raids and the defense of democratic rights. Register here.

In an escalation of its provocative police-state measures, Ford Motor Co. has targeted workers at the historic Ford Rouge Complex in Dearborn, Michigan. On Monday, workers were told Ford was sending police and K-9 units into the Dearborn Truck and Rouge Electric Vehicle plants, under the pretext of seizing drugs and firearms and protecting the safety of workers.

This follows an earlier raid on January 30 and 31, where Ford security carried out a raid of the Michigan Assembly Plant (MAP), with the full blessings of the United Auto Workers bureaucracy.

Neither Ford nor the UAW President Shawn Fain have any official statements on the police raids or details about the highly secretive operations of Ford's Global Security Task Force, which is directing them.

After WSWS articles on the raid at MAP were read and shared by tens of thousands of workers, the *Detroit Free Press* published a February 7 article, which repeated the company and UAW propaganda about protecting workers' safety. The article did note, however, the January raids "won't be the last" and was "one part of new and enhanced security initiatives coming at Ford to be used in all of the Dearborn-based automaker's U.S. plants."

Monday morning, workers were informed of the impending raid through social media posts by UAW Local 600 Dearborn Truck Plant (DTP) unit president Nick Kottalis. There was not the slightest suggestion from the union bureaucrat that the raid was a blatant violation of workers' democratic rights, which should be opposed. Far from it. Kottalis echoed management's lies that the raids were aimed at stopping "illegal activity" in the plants.

"Good morning, the company is coming in with tracking dogs and security teams to clean out any marijuana, illegal activity, alcohol, everything from all the plants in North America starting today," Kottalis posted on Instagram.

On the Dearborn Truck Plant Employees Facebook page, he stated:

DTP/RevC and all employees, I have just been notified that the company plans on bringing in tracking dogs and security to remove any illegal activity inside their building(s). If you have anything illegal in any Company building, please remove it immediately. I'm taking this Very Serious!

Shocked and angered rank-and-file workers on the morning shift (A Crew) immediately forwarded these notifications to the *World Socialist Web Site*, which was the first publication to report the raids and oppose

this blatant violation of workers' democratic rights.

By the afternoon, B Crew workers were reporting that some type of security activity had taken place in the body shop. Again, there was no official statements from the company or union officials. A Rouge worker at the stamping plant said he had not seen anything about the raid and a co-worker at the truck plant told the WSWS, "I am just finding out about the new round of searches from you guys."

On February 16, the Ford Workers Rank-and-File Committee issued a statement, titled, "No police, no dogs, no undercover agents in our factories! Build rank-and-file committees in every plant!" The statement denounced the first raid and declared:

No matter what the bureaucrats from Solidarity House or the Locals say, we do not give up our Constitutional rights when we walk into the plant. Under the Fourth Amendment to the US Constitution, enacted into law in 1792 and upheld ever since, no agency of government, no company nor individual has the right to conduct unreasonable searches and seizures of our property or our persons, no matter where they may occur.

The committee urged workers to fight for the following demands:

- No police in the plants!
- End ICE raids!
- Defend democratic rights for all workers!
- An injury to one is an injury to all!
- No layoffs!
- Restore retirements!
- No loss in pay! (If hours are reduced, increase pay to compensate)
- Build rank-and-file committees to take control of conditions in every plant

The claim by the corporation and the UAW that these raids are being conducted out of concern for the safety and well being of workers is a fraud. The corporation, with the full complicity of its union stooges, regularly subjects workers to mandatory overtime, job overloading and unsafe conditions.

On April 17, 2024, Tywaun Long Jr., a 46-year-old DTP worker, collapsed on the assembly line and died of an apparent heart attack shortly after being refused medical assistance in the plant.

And in 2017, young autoworker Jacoby Hennings died of a gunshot wound suffered outside the UAW office at Woodhaven Stamping Plant under murky circumstances. The UAW and Ford claimed that Hennings was a "disgruntled employee" on drugs, later proven false by an autopsy, and that he had committed suicide when police SWAT teams arrived after being alerted by UAW bureaucrats.

If the company and the union were really concerned about workers' well being, they could begin with ending the abusive conditions that

destroy workers' bodies and mental health, and contribute to substance abuse issues.

Moreover, if it is "illegal activity" the corporation is concerned with, management knows it is centered in Solidarity House and the UAW's regional and local offices, not the shop floor. Not only have nearly a dozen top UAW officers, including two past presidents, been locked up for taking company bribes and embezzling dues money, workers have filed countless lawsuits and grievances against UAW bureaucrats for sexual abuse, selling job applications and threatening militant workers.

But all of this has been done in the interests of the corporate management ... so there is nothing to see there.

In comments to the *Detroit Free Press*, Scott Elliott, the UAW local president at the Michigan Assembly Plant made it clear that Ford "safety monitors," which were being sent into every plant in the United States "will be working with the UAW and the company safety team." In other words, the UAW bureaucracy will be working alongside of Ford's industrial spies and the police to intimidate and fire workers.

There is very little public information about Ford's Global Security Task Force. But an internet search shows that Ford's security operation is headed by a figure with a long history in intelligence and "asset protection," including for the US government.

Ford's Global Security Manager is a man named Scott Vogel, who spent more than 23 years in the US Secret Service, including in the presidential protective and protective intelligence divisions, according to his profile on LinkedIn.com. Vogel is a "highly accomplished professional in planning, management and execution of highly sensitive domestic and security operations" who currently "[s]uccessfully manages Ford's Executive Protection Program, Global Investigations, Crisis Management and established Ford's New Product Security and Protective Intelligence program."

What is this massive security crackdown really for?

The Ford executives and the rest of the corporate and financial oligarchy that rules the United States are very concerned about the growth of strikes and working class opposition over the last several years.

This includes strikes by autoworkers in 2019 and 2023, as well as wildcat action to shut down the industry at the start of the pandemic in 2020. Despite the treachery of the UAW bureaucracy, these gave expression to the immense social power of the working class, its deep hatred for social inequality and strivings to unite with workers across national boundaries.

They have also demonstrated the weakening of the grip of the UAW bureaucracy, which has functioned as an industrial police force for the auto bosses for decades.

This opposition will only grow as the impact of Trump's tariffs—which Ford's CEO Jim Farley says will "blow a hole in the auto industry"—accelerate the massive job and cost-cutting measures, which followed Fain's sellout of the 2023 contract battle. Two shifts at the Rouge Electric Vehicle Center have already been eliminated, part of thousands of layoffs nationwide.

The police intimidation is really meant to create a climate of fear and prevent a unified struggle in defense of jobs and safe conditions in every plant.

There is no doubt that Ford and the other automakers, which are reportedly implementing their own "enhanced" security operations, have been encouraged by Trump's flagrant violation of the US Constitution and the workplace raids and round up of immigrants by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents.

But as events have shown, Trump's torrent of executive orders targeting immigrant workers was only a dry run for sweeping attacks on the whole working class. This why all workers, native-born and immigrant, must unite in a common fight to defend their democratic and social rights and put an end to the raids by ICE, corporate security and the police.

As Musk's mass firing of federal workers demonstrates, Trump's government of oligarchs look at workers as industrial slaves who should beg for their jobs. Musk's Tesla plants, moreover, are notorious for high levels of surveillance aimed at collecting information and preventing workers from organizing collective action to defend their jobs, safety and democratic rights.

The measures being employed by Ford are reminiscent of the "labor spy racket" that was used in the early decades of the 20th century. Harry Bennett, the former boxer, headed Ford's Service Department, a paramilitary organization of some 3,000 spies and anti-union goons. They patrolled the shop floor and corridors of the Rouge complex, creating an atmosphere of fear where even the mere suggestion of union or socialist activity would lead to a beating and summary dismissal.

According to the inquiry of the US Senate's La Follette Civil Liberties Committee (1931-46), US corporations employed between 40,000 and 135,000 spies from the Burns, Pinkerton and other detective agencies during the 1930s at the cost of \$80 million a year, or \$2.56 billion in 2025 dollars.

Ford, an avid admirer of Hitler and the Nazis, used his Service Department to brutally assault UAW organizers in the 1930s, including future union president Walter Reuther at the infamous "Battle of the Overpass" outside of the Rouge plant in 1937. But today, Ford and the other automakers rely on their stool pigeons in the UAW bureaucracy to spy on and intimidate militant workers.

UAW officials regularly denounce the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter* and its supporters as "outside agitators" for telling the truth and providing a voice to workers. They did everything they could to prevent workers from knowing about the 2022-23 UAW presidential elections and the candidacy of socialist Mack Trucks worker Will Lehman who called for the building of rank-and-file committees to abolish the bureaucracy and transfer power from the UAW apparatus to the workers on the shop floor.

The truth is the UAW bureaucracy wants the police in the factories just as much as management to protect themselves from an increasingly rebellious workforce.

As the Ford Workers Rank-and-File Committee declared, "We are not going back to the conditions of industrial slavery, enforced by Ford's Servicemen goons, that existed before our fathers and grandfathers built the union."

To fight for the removal of the police and spies from the plants, and defend democratic rights, along with jobs, living standards and working conditions, autoworkers must expand the network of rank-and-file committees in the plants to counterpose the will of workers to the dictatorial measures of the corporations, the Trump administration and both corporate controlled parties, and their accomplices in the union bureaucracy.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact