

Disaffection grows in US military amid ICE raids and domestic deployments

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President Donald Trump's deployment of 4,000 National Guard troops and 700 Marines to Los Angeles to support federal immigration raids has triggered growing disaffection among sections of the US military.

As of this writing, some 2,000 National Guard soldiers and Marines remain deployed throughout Southern California in support of the mass deportation operation.

The domestic deployment has not sat well with many soldiers, as indicated by a marked increase in calls to the GI Rights Hotline, a non-profit, non-governmental organization that provides support for people in the military.

"They don't want to deport their uncle or their wife or their brother-in-law," explained counselor Steve Woolford.

In an interview with NBC, Woolford explained that the hotline typically receives 200 calls a month, around seven a day. However, Woolford said, this past Sunday alone it received 50 calls, with a majority from soldiers and their family members following the National Guard deployment to Los Angeles.

One soldier told the hotline, "I joined to defend my country ... but No. 1 is family, and this is actually a threat to my family." Some now agonize over the legality of their mission, fearful that they are being used for a cause they abhor.

Troops and their families have expressed the view that they did not sign up to suppress domestic protests or serve as pawns in a political conflict. "What we're hearing from our families is: 'This is not what we signed up for,'" said Brandi Jones of the Secure Families Initiative. Janessa Goldbeck, a Marine veteran, reported a "universal expression" among service members that this is "an unnecessary deployment" and one that pits soldiers against their own communities.

"The young men and women who raised their right

hand to serve their country did not sign up to police their own neighbors," Goldbeck said. One veteran's wife, shocked to learn that the 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment—"The War Dogs"—had been sent to Los Angeles, said, "To hear that unit affiliated with this—for my family that's been serving for two decades, it brings up a lot."

The reality on the ground makes their concerns all the more justified. From June 1 to June 26, ICE data show that in the Los Angeles region alone, 2,031 immigrants were arrested. Of these, a staggering 68 percent had no criminal convictions, and 57 percent had never even been charged with a crime.

These figures explode the lie, endlessly repeated by Trump and the capitalist media, that immigration raids target "dangerous criminals." The targets of these military-backed raids are not drug lords or gang members—they are overwhelmingly working class immigrants—neighbors, coworkers and family members.

Trump ordered the withdrawal of 2,000 troops from the city this week. While officials claimed this was because unrest was subsiding, the ruling class is acutely aware of the political dangers posed by a military beginning to question its mission. The fear is not of protests alone—It is of the spreading recognition within the ranks that they are being used not to protect the population but to attack it.

These sentiments reflect the contradiction between the military's official ideology of defending the nation and the people within it, and its real role under capitalism: defending the interests of the ruling class. When soldiers are ordered to police working class neighborhoods, suppress protests or break up immigrant families, it becomes increasingly clear that the military is an instrument of class rule.

Though command insists that morale is high, on-the-ground realities paint a different picture. Soldiers have been sleeping on concrete floors and left without adequate

food, water or pay for weeks.

The ruling class cannot count on unconditional loyalty from soldiers, especially when ordered to act against their class brothers and sisters. As one attorney put it, “They never envisioned they would be deployed to the streets of the United States.” But this is precisely the role they are being assigned in a society wracked by deepening inequality and repression.

Six National Guard soldiers interviewed by the *New York Times* earlier this month following the Los Angeles deployment expressed such sentiments. All but one of the soldiers told the newspaper they had “reservations about the deployment.”

The soldiers, which included infantrymen, officers and “two officials in leadership roles,” said they themselves had raised objections to the mission, or they knew a soldier who had.

The *Times* reported that following the deployment at least 105 soldiers have sought counseling from “behavioral health officers,” including “at least one company commander and one battalion commander who objected to the mission and were reassigned to work unrelated to the mobilization.”

According to National Guard officers interviewed by the *Times*, some troops “became so disgruntled that there were several reports of soldiers defecating in Humvees and showers at the Southern California base where the troops are stationed, prompting tightened bathroom security.”

In one incident described to the *Times*, 60 National Guard soldiers were set to be transported to Ventura County to participate in an immigration raid. A Latino soldier told officers he did not want to participate in the kidnapping operation and offered to be arrested instead.

Notably, out of 72 California National Guard soldiers whose enlistment was set to expire during the deployment, two have already left the Guard while another 55 have indicated they will not re-enlist, according to the office of Governor Gavin Newsom.

Disaffection within the ranks emerged during the “dress rehearsal” at Los Angeles’ MacArthur Park earlier this month—a military-style operation that involved a coordinated sweep by National Guard and federal agents in a dense urban working class neighborhood.

Meant to be a preliminary demonstration of dictatorial power, the MacArthur Park raid, known as Operation Excalibur, revealed that many soldiers were disturbed by the imagery of militarized raids on immigrant communities.

This emerging consciousness among military personnel recalls the experience of revolutionary Russia in 1917. In *The History of the Russian Revolution*, Leon Trotsky traces the transformation of the Russian army from a pillar of Tsarist reaction into a force aligned with the working class.

“Not the army but the workers began the insurrection,” Trotsky wrote of the February Revolution, “but the soldiers supported the workers ... because they felt themselves blood brothers of the workers as a class composed of toilers like themselves.”

The brutal experience of World War I had radicalized the rank and file. The immense suffering inflicted by the imperialist slaughter shattered the morale of the armed forces and generated the conditions for mass revolt.

The shift, as Trotsky noted, started “from a deep but as yet hidden revolutionary discontent to overt mutinous action,” transforming into open mutiny as soldiers faced orders to shoot striking workers—an order many refused.

The revolution unfolded as a process of rising discontent, bitter experience, political education and, ultimately, the decision to break with the old order. The soldiers began electing Soviets, refusing orders to fire on strikers and openly aligning with the revolution.

In the lead-up to the October Revolution, mass disillusionment with the Provisional Government’s war policies fueled further radicalization among soldiers and workers. This unrest, while widespread, was not enough on its own. It was the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky—who channeled spontaneous anger into organized revolutionary action—that played the decisive role in uniting soldiers with workers and peasants, arming the Soviets and establishing the first workers’ state in history.

The cracks now surfacing in the US military are not yet a revolutionary break. But they are signs of a real and irreversible social process. The contradictions of capitalist rule are reaching deep into the institutions upon which it relies most heavily.

The working class must draw the necessary conclusions. The state, its courts, its police and its military do not serve the people—They serve capital. But they are not invincible.



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