

# Trump's military grip tightens on Washington

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What is now taking place in Washington D.C. is an unfolding presidential coup d'état. National Guard troops from six Republican-run states began to deploy on the streets of Washington D.C. Wednesday, while Trump administration officials declared that the US capital could remain under military occupation indefinitely, depending only on the decisions of Trump as "commander-in-chief."

Troops arrived Tuesday from West Virginia, and Wednesday from South Carolina, Ohio, Mississippi and Louisiana, with troops from Tennessee expected as well. This will bring the total police-military presence in the US capital to nearly 9,000 (3,200 Metropolitan police, 2,300 Capitol police, 1,200 state National Guard troops, 800 DC National Guard troops, 472 police from the Washington Metro transit system, 350 National Park Police and at least 500 other armed federal agents, including FBI and ICE).

Much of the National Guard force entering Washington comes from states that once formed the Confederacy. Trump is consciously drawing on the most reactionary traditions in American history. On the very day these troops arrived in the capital, Trump launched a tirade on social media against the Smithsonian Institution for presenting exhibits that, in his view, spent "too much time" describing "how bad slavery was."

Three of Trump's principal political thugs, Vice President JD Vance, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, and White House deputy chief of staff Stephen Miller, greeted National Guard troops inside Union Station on Wednesday. The location was deliberately chosen, only a block from the Capitol building, where the previous Trump-led invasion of Washington culminated in the violent assault on Congress on January 6, 2021.

In a very real sense, the takeover of Washington ordered by Trump on August 11, 2025 is the direct continuation—or rather the resumption—of the coup d'état that Trump attempted to overturn the results of the 2020 elections. This time, however, the action has been carefully planned over the seven months since Trump re-entered the White House, and he relies not on thousands of undisciplined and largely unorganized rioters, but on the armed forces of the capitalist state.

Vance, Hegseth and Miller posed for pictures with the troops and claimed that the military intervention has already slashed the rate of violent crime in Washington—the nominal pretext for the military intervention. But their preening before the media was disrupted by chants of "Free DC, Free DC" from protesters opposed to Trump's actions, which echoed loudly inside the building.

This provoked a fascistic rant from Miller, who denounced the protesters as "crazy communists," adding, "We're not going to let the communists destroy a great American city, let alone the nation's

capital." He claimed the protesters were outsiders with "no roots in this city," and accused them of advocating for "the criminals, the killers, the rapists, the drug dealers."

Miller went on to call the District of Columbia "one of the most violent cities on planet earth," although it is less violent than most of the capital cities of the states whose Republican governors have sent National Guard troops.

While Miller set the hysterical tone, Vance delivered the main message, that the military occupation of the US capital could be of indefinite duration. Asked about the 30-day deadline, set by law in the 1973 DC Home Rule Act, for Trump to get congressional authorization for his takeover of the Washington police, Vance replied, "Well, we'll ultimately let the president of the United States determine where we are after 30 days of this emergency order... if the president of the United States thinks that he has to extend this order to ensure that people have access to public safety, then that's exactly what he'll do."

Asked to respond to polls showing that a majority of Washington D.C. residents oppose the deployment of the National Guard and feel less safe with their city flooded with armed men, including hundreds wearing masks as they stage raids and arrests, Vance sneered, "Maybe the same polls that said Kamala Harris won the popular vote by 10 points." He then shut down the press briefing.

The troop deployment in Washington is following a worked-out design, highlighting the military by stationing uniformed troops and armored vehicles at every location likely to attract out-of-town visitors: the Washington Monument and National Mall, the Lincoln Memorial, the White House, Capitol Hill and Union Station. This was expanded Wednesday to 10 Metro stations, mainly in the downtown area. The aim is to normalize a visible role for the US military in the US capital, in a sharp break with past practice.

Up to now, neither troops nor police have engaged in mass repression against the population of the city, although there have been scattered clashes in immigrant neighborhoods provoked by the setting up of checkpoints and brutal actions by ICE agents. This is only temporary, however. The logic of Trump's policies and his visceral hatred of the working class lead inexorably to violence.

Trump's political coup is assisted by the corporate media, which has downplayed the military-police occupation to an extraordinary extent. The hometown *Washington Post*, owned by billionaire Jeff Bezos, the Amazon boss who is one of the world's richest men, relegated its report on the deployment of National Guard troops from six states to an inside page of its Metro news section, as if it was describing a local water main break and not a major step in the erection of a presidential dictatorship in America.

In a rare exception to the media blackout, David Graham in the *Atlantic* commented, “Humvees posted at places such as Union Station make the capital look more like the Green Zone in Baghdad than the place you get off the Amtrak. Federal agents appear to have torn down a political sign in a liberal neighborhood and refused to identify themselves or their agencies in confrontations.”

After noting that Trump has set no target date for ending the deployment, Graham concluded: “That raises the scary prospect that it could just go on forever—or slide into martial law around the country... With no stated goal, and with an acquiescent Congress and Supreme Court, the country could end up with the US military occupying its major cities before most Americans realize what’s happening.”

Over the course of just seven months in office, Trump has implemented a systematic plan to establish a fascistic dictatorship. A series of executive orders has laid the groundwork for invoking the Insurrection Act and criminalizing opposition to the Gaza genocide.

Federal troops have already been deployed to the US-Mexico border, and then to back up mass anti-immigrant raids in Los Angeles, followed by the grotesque June 14 military parade in Washington D.C., with tanks rolling through the streets of the capital on Trump’s 79th birthday. Now the military-police occupation of the nation’s capital has begun, with plans underway for similar deployments in major cities throughout the country.

The principal factor enabling this drive towards dictatorship is the collaboration of the Democratic Party, which seeks to block any expression of the mass popular opposition to Trump’s ongoing seizure of power, diverting it into the dead end of legal appeals and impotent protests. It is worth noting here that in the same poll that showed D.C. residents opposed Trump’s military takeover, 50 percent felt that Democratic Mayor Muriel Bowser had done too little to resist it.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer called Trump’s actions a “political ploy” and an “attempted distraction from Trump’s other scandals,” such as his ties to the late multi-millionaire sex trafficker Jeffrey Epstein. Schumer’s deputy, Senator Dick Durbin, called the troop mobilization “political theater.” Maryland Governor Wes Moore told the *New York Times*, “I see this as performative and nothing more.”

So Trump is overthrowing American democracy to “distract” from a sex scandal! The sheer absurdity of this argument is a demonstration of the political bankruptcy of the Democratic Party. It apparently does not occur to these gentlemen that if Trump is able to seize power as a president-dictator he will not have to worry about unflattering news reports or congressional investigations.

Speaking to the media outside the White House last week, Trump’s “border czar” Tom Homan declared, “President Trump doesn’t have a limitation on his authority to make this country safe again. There’s no limitation on that.” These words have meaning: Trump and his top aides recognize no legal and constitutional restraint on the powers of the presidency.

Earlier in the week, during a Monday press briefing at the White House, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky made reference to his postponing the presidential election set for March 2024 indefinitely, under martial law rule imposed after the Russian invasion of February 2022. “So you’re saying during the war you can’t have elections,” Trump said, jumping in. “So, let me just say, three and a half years from now... if we happen to be in a war with somebody, no more elections. Oh, that’s good.”

The political trajectory of this administration is unmistakably

towards war and dictatorship. This is the outcome of a fundamental shift in class relations. What is being demonstrated every day is that the extreme social inequality that prevails under American capitalism today is incompatible with the democratic forms established by the American Revolution and extended by the Civil War. America has once again become a “house divided”—but this time between a tiny stratum of billionaires and corporate bosses at the top, and the vast majority, the working class and lower sections of the middle class, facing a constant struggle to survive.

Working people and young people must face reality. President Trump is establishing the framework and precedent for military-police dictatorship, not just in Washington D.C., but in every city and state. The Democratic Party will do nothing to stop it. The corporate media will not even acknowledge that the coup is taking place. And the pseudo-left organizations like the Democratic Socialists of America, along with the trade unions, tell workers to put their faith in the Democrats and elect more Democrats in 2026, if there even is an election.

Trump’s coup has already provoked protests in Washington. Inevitably, as he seeks to extend his bid for power, there will be mass resistance. Trump is setting himself on a collision course with millions of working people in the United States.

In the absence of opposition from within the existing political structure, the center of resistance to Trump must move to the working class. The basic political questions that must be answered are: What must be done by the working class, with the support of students and all progressive forces within society, to stop the establishment of a dictatorship in the United States? What are the new forms of organized mass action, including a general strike, required to defend the democratic rights of the working class? What changes in the economic and social structure of the country are necessary to break the power of the financial-corporate oligarchy?

In confronting the rebellion of the Slavocracy in 1861, Lincoln was driven to the conclusion that the democratic principles proclaimed by the Declaration of Independence could be preserved only through a revolution that destroyed the economic base of the confederacy, slavery. Exactly 160 years after the conclusion of the Civil War, the threat of a fascistic military-police dictatorship poses the necessity of ending the economic base of oligarchic power, capitalism, and its replacement with workers’ power and socialism.



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