

# Border Gestapo seize immigrant firefighters battling blaze in Washington state

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In an escalation of Trump's attacks on immigrants and democratic rights, federal agents last week arrested two firefighters who were actively battling the Bear Gulch fire, Washington state's largest active wildfire. The raid on an emergency response operation exposes again that the true target of the raids is not just immigrants, but the working class as a whole.

The arrests occurred the morning of August 27 as private contractor crews were deployed to fight the 9,000-acre blaze burning in Olympic National Forest. Officers from Border Patrol, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and the Bureau of Land Management surrounded the firefighters at a remote staging area, demanding identification from all 44 crew members before detaining two for alleged illegal entry into the United States.

There is also mounting evidence that firefighting management officials collaborated with the federal government to orchestrate what can only be described as an ambush. According to multiple wildfire veterans who spoke to reporters, the California Interagency Incident Management Team 7 sent the targeted crews to an isolated location under false pretenses, claiming they would cut firewood for the local community.

"There's really no way [the wildfire management team] could not have been involved," said Riva Duncan, a former wildland fire chief with over 30 years of experience in the US Forest Service, speaking to the States Newsroom. "Fire areas are officially closed, very secure and there are roadblocks. Somebody would have had to tell these agents how to get there."

Other crew members also expressed anger at their own leadership. One firefighter present at the scene described feeling "beyond betrayed" by the management team's apparent complicity. "What they did was messed up," an anonymous firefighter told the

Newsroom. "They'd been talking in their briefings about building relationships and trust. For them to say that and then go do this is mind-boggling. It boiled my blood."

The confrontation reportedly lasted for three hours. Other workers on the scene were denied the opportunity to say goodbye to their detained colleagues and were ordered not to record the proceedings. When one firefighter asked if families could say goodbye to those being arrested, an agent reportedly responded: "You need to get the [expletive] out of here. I'm gonna make you leave."

Duncan also noted that firefighters still assigned to the Bear Gulch fire are "disgusted with the situation and want to leave." She continued, "The three principal wildland fire values are duty, respect, integrity. Utmost in that is taking care of your people. If you can't trust the people you're working with when things get hairy, that's a concern."

Federal officials justified the arrests by claiming the crews were under investigation for time-card fraud—supposedly a 30-minute discrepancy on a timesheet. Such minor administrative issues are routinely handled between organizational leaders, not treated as criminal matters requiring armed raids, and the pretext provided by management was used to quickly give way to immigration enforcement.

The response from local and state Democratic officials has been characteristically complicit with Trump's ongoing efforts to establish a dictatorship in the United States. Washington Governor Bob Ferguson merely said he was "deeply concerned" and directed his team to gather information. Representative Emily Randall wrote in all caps on Twitter/X that the arrests were "NOT MAKING AMERICA SAFER."

Nowhere was any suggestion for a broad mobilization

of the working class, especially among firefighters, against Trump's authoritarian agenda.

The Democrats' refusal to mount effective resistance stems from their shared commitment to the capitalist system that requires the exploitation of the working class. Whatever their tactical differences with Trump's methods, they ultimately defend the profit motive and as a party have played a key role in erecting the repressive apparatus that Trump is now using.

The immigration raid against wildfire firefighters also expresses some of the contempt the Trump administration has toward all efforts to combat or even acknowledge the dangers posed by climate change. The fire is in what is typically one of the country's wettest forests, a small but significant expression of the impact of climate change on Earth's environment. Trump's actions are a direct attack on the broad masses of workers who bear the brunt of the ongoing ecological degradation, all of which has been induced by the anarchic nature of the capitalist economy, including industrial production.

The Bear Gulch raid must be understood as part of Trump's broader strategy to establish a presidential dictatorship through the systematic erosion of constitutional protections, even for emergency responders. The use of administrative pretexts to conduct warrantless raids, the deployment of armed agents against firefighters and the collaboration of management officials are all building blocks for a police state.

This technological surveillance apparatus extends far beyond physical raids. Recent revelations in the *Guardian* show that ICE has acquired Israeli-made spyware capable of hacking phones and encrypted messaging apps, giving the agency unprecedented access to communications and personal data. This technology has already been abused by governments worldwide to target journalists, human rights activists, and civil society members. The combination of physical raids and digital surveillance creates the foundation for comprehensive suppression of working class opposition.

One of the detained firefighters, represented by Innovation Law Lab, has been in the United States since age four and served as a firefighter for three years. His arrest demonstrates that no worker—regardless of their contribution to society or

length of residence—is safe from Trump's attack on democratic rights.

The incident also gives some glimpse of the enormous anger in the working class to Trump's policies. The solidarity displayed between the firefighters in opposing these arrests points to the real source of any genuine fight against the emerging dictatorship. It also makes clear the urgent need to break from the Democratic Party, which is fundamentally aligned with Trump's arch-reactionary policies.

The defense of immigrant workers and the fight against dictatorship require the independent mobilization of the working class, armed with the understanding that attacks on any section of workers threaten the rights and conditions of all. The Bear Gulch arrests serve as a warning: Trump's police-state measures will not stop with immigrants, but will be extended to threaten all forms of working class opposition to the capitalist system.



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