

Trump targets Memphis, New Orleans for troop deployments

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14 September 2025

The Trump administration is accelerating plans to deploy National Guard troops to Memphis and New Orleans, while delaying such action in Chicago, according to statements by Trump and a report based on Pentagon documents obtained by the *Washington Post*.

Trump is maneuvering, conducting probing operations using federal police agencies while seeking to determine how best to advance his plans for outright military dictatorship. While the White House cites “crime” as the pretext for federal intervention, all the cities Trump has targeted have seen significant drops in crime and violence in the past two years.

Trump announced the targeting of Memphis, the second-largest city in Tennessee, during an appearance on Fox News Friday. “I’ll be the first to say it now, we’re going to Memphis,” he declared, then adding, “I would have preferred going to Chicago.”

He said he would deploy the “National Guard and anybody else we need. And by the way, we’ll bring in the military too, if we need it.”

CNN reported a shift in White House plans as follows: “Trump had started backing off his threats to send troops to the Democratic-controlled city last week, saying, ‘We’re waiting on a call from Chicago.’ And Attorney General Pam Bondi has hinted at the shift in strategy as well, telling reporters the administration will go to cities ‘who want us there.’”

The network cited unnamed White House sources suggesting that there were legal complications in ordering National Guard troops into Chicago when the governor of the state and the mayor of the city, both Democrats, were opposed to it. In Memphis, by contrast, Tennessee Governor Bill Lee, a Republican, enthusiastically backs whatever action Trump chooses to take.

Lee issued a statement on social media Friday saying that he has been “in constant communication with the Trump Administration to develop a multi-phased, strategic plan to combat crime in Memphis, leveraging the full extent of both federal and state resources.”

He gave further details, saying, “The next phase will include a comprehensive mission with the Tennessee National Guard, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Tennessee Highway Patrol, Memphis Police Department, and other law enforcement agencies, and we are working closely with the Trump administration to determine the most effective role for each of these agencies to best serve Memphians.”

Paul Young, the Democratic mayor of Memphis, and Lee Harris, the Democrat who heads the government of surrounding Shelby County, both declared their opposition to the use of the National Guard. But Young emphasized his desire to cooperate with federal agencies like the FBI, the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF). “Those are the things that I believe will truly help us be able to support law enforcement and reduce violent crime,” he said.

Harris pointed to the threat to democratic rights posed by Trump’s threats, posting on X, “Let’s be clear: the President sending troops to Tennessee will interfere and have a chilling effect on Tennesseans’ ability to exercise critical freedoms, such as the freedom to protest and the liberty to travel.” But neither Democrat indicated any plans to do more than file lawsuits or seek further discussions with the federal authorities.

While there is no public timetable for a military operation in Memphis, the *Washington Post* published a report Saturday based on documents detailing a Pentagon draft plan to activate 1,000 Louisiana National Guard troops and deploy them to support

police and federal agencies operating in that state's "urban centers," primarily New Orleans and Baton Rouge.

The documents reportedly included "an unsigned, undated draft memo from Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth to Attorney General Pam Bondi and Homeland Security Secretary Kristi L. Noem that describes the 'unique advantage'" of the Pentagon's proposed approach to law enforcement in Louisiana.

The plan was said to be waiting for a formal request from Republican Governor Jeff Landry, who has spoken publicly in support of such an action. Trump told Fox News, "New Orleans is in really bad shape, and the governor wants us to go in." While he boasted that federal troops would restore "law and order" in weeks, if not days, the Pentagon plan reportedly provides for a troop presence in Louisiana until September 30, 2026—more than a year from now.

The *Post* added that the Pentagon had confirmed the documents were authentic but said it would not comment on them, issuing a statement that "Leaked documents should not be interpreted as policy."

The *Post* interviewed Randy Manner, a retired Army general and former acting vice chief of the National Guard, who was highly critical of the procedure being employed by the Trump administration. "The governor is supposed to request this, not the president or the secretary of defense," he told the newspaper, calling the move "absolutely nothing more than a political grab of power. ... I've never heard of this kind of thing happening before this administration—not in my 35 years" of military service.

Another former Pentagon official told the *Post*, "This suggests that in the shopping of places to send troops, there's probably some political conversation that is happening." Many Louisiana Republican officials, including House Speaker Mike Johnson, have backed a military deployment in New Orleans.

The proposal is a threat, not only to democratic rights but to the physical security of the population of Louisiana, coming as it does at the height of hurricane season, when most of the state's National Guard troops could be called on for emergency rescue and recovery operations.

Other press reports suggested rising concern among Democratic mayors, who head the local governments of most large American cities. Justin Bibb, mayor of

Cleveland and chair of the Democratic Mayors Association, said, "I'll work with anybody to keep my city safe ... I'll do it with this administration, but I don't want the damn National Guard in Cleveland patrolling my streets."

The last remark is a piece of hollow demagoguery, like that spouted by Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson and Illinois Governor JB Pritzker, designed to give the Democrats political cover while they collaborate with whatever measures the White House ultimately decides to take. Any shift in tactics by the White House in relation to Chicago—which remains very much under threat—is due to concerns about the likely response among working people in the huge metropolitan area, the third-largest in the country.

Stepped-up raids by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents across the country have provoked confrontations, including the killing of an undocumented worker by ICE officers in Chicago.

In Rochester, New York, when several roofing workers were targeted by ICE, the workers called their families from the roof of the home on which they were working and a crowd of several hundred soon gathered to support them. The tires of the ICE vehicles were slashed, and the agents were forced to withdraw, taking one immigrant with them but leaving the others, who were consulting with their lawyers about the next steps they should take.



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