

Why has Hegseth summoned military commanders to Washington?

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Secretary of War Pete Hegseth has ordered hundreds of US generals and admirals to a meeting early next week at Quantico Marine Corps base, just outside of Washington. The assembly, called on extraordinarily short notice and without any reason or agenda being announced, was reported Thursday by the *Washington Post* and later confirmed by the Pentagon press office.

Hegseth and the Pentagon have given no details on the purpose of the meeting. The *Post* noted that “senior officers said they could not recall another instance in recent decades when commanders from across the globe were summoned with so little notice, without a clear agenda.” One unnamed officer described the move as “highly unusual, bordering on unprecedented.”

Commanders in combat zones, like the Persian Gulf and the Caribbean Sea, as well as those leading large-scale military exercises in Egypt, Japan and Puerto Rico, have had to leave their commands on short notice to fly to Washington. That has only increased what one military-related publication called the sense of “alarm” over the event.

Trump, speaking to the press Thursday afternoon in the Oval Office, appeared to be unaware that the meeting involved American military officers rather than invited guests from foreign militaries. But the significance of next week’s assembly of top officers can be seen by the political context in which it takes place.

It follows Trump’s fascistic rant to the United Nations General Assembly on Monday, when he defended Israel’s ethnic cleansing of Gaza, threatened to “blow [Venezuela] out of existence” and boasted of the US-Israeli bombing of Iran. He claimed that American military power had never been greater, while making the same claim about US economic power,

although that is obviously false.

It is not likely, however, that Trump and Hegseth would need to summon the entire top officer corps to Washington to initiate new military operations around the world. Far more likely—and ominously—is that the Trump administration is seeking to reorganize the military in preparation for operations within the United States itself, in an unprecedented assault on the democratic rights of the American people.

The summoning of the generals must be assessed in the context of Trump’s escalating efforts to establish a fascist dictatorship at home. National Guard troops already occupy Washington D.C., following Trump’s August 11 declaration of a state of emergency over a nonexistent “crime wave” in the US capital. This past weekend, Trump and his inner circle staged a grotesque memorial for fascist agitator Charlie Kirk in Arizona, transforming it into a Nuremberg-style rally. Hegseth himself addressed the gathering, declaring the United States to be in the midst of a “spiritual war,” while Trump vowed to unleash the National Guard against American cities.

In his remarks to the press Thursday afternoon, after signing a presidential memorandum targeting “antifa” and the “radical left” as “domestic terrorists,” Trump reiterated his plans to send federal agents and National Guard troops into Chicago and Memphis, while pushing lie after lie about the need to do the same in Portland, Oregon, which has the biggest drop in murders of any city in America. He portrayed the city as in the grip of “antifa,” which does not even exist as an organization but is cited endlessly by Trump and his aides as a justification for a military-police takeover of urban America.

Carrying out such actions on a wide scale would require the deployment of regular troops along with the

police and National Guard. Top Pentagon officials opposed his plans to declare martial law during the mass protests which followed the police murder of George Floyd in May 2020, and Trump has never forgiven or forgotten that. The principal lesson Trump and his advisers drew from the failure of his violent coup attempt on January 6, 2021 was the necessity of bringing the military under his direct personal control.

Since reclaiming the White House, Trump has moved relentlessly to ensure that the armed forces will be aligned with his drive to dictatorship. His selection of Hegseth, a fascist commentator for Fox News identified with the defense of US officers guilty of war crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan, was a green light for the perpetration of similar crimes on a vaster scale.

The new Pentagon boss fired the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and many other top officers, particularly targeting those who were black, female or promoted by Democrat Joe Biden. He publicly embraced a “warrior ethos” linked to blood-and-soil nationalism and Christianity, dispatched Marines to Los Angeles at Trump’s request to back vicious ICE raids on immigrant communities, and, most recently, required Pentagon reporters to sign pledges not to use “unauthorized” information—in other words, to become stenographers for the military command.

Hegseth’s extraordinary order recalling virtually the entire senior command to Washington must therefore be seen as a test of loyalty, a warning and potentially the prelude to a purge of any figures considered unreliable.

The timing of the military assembly coincides with the looming September 30 deadline for government funding. Trump and his advisers have made clear that they intend to use a shutdown as a weapon to carry out mass firings of federal employees and a wholesale restructuring of the state. A shutdown would accelerate this process, stripping away federal workers, gutting social programs, and dismantling the last remnants of public health, while ensuring that the military remains the one sector fully funded and prepared for domestic repression.

Amidst these unprecedented developments, there is not a trace of genuine opposition within the political establishment. The Democrats, the corporate media and the trade unions remain silent and thereby complicit. Their role is to disorient and suppress popular

opposition while Trump and his fascist allies press forward with the erection of a presidential dictatorship.

The *Washington Post* reported the summoning of the generals and admirals to Quantico in a report prominently displayed on its website Thursday morning. By Thursday evening, no prominent Democrat had so much as issued a statement on the matter. House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries held a press conference devoted to the impending federal shutdown in which he made no warning of the imminent threat to democratic rights and constitutional processes.

The principal concern of the Democrats is to reach an agreement with Trump to continue and intensify the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine, the keystone of the foreign policy of the Biden administration. If Trump shifts in that direction, as indicated in his remarks at the UN, the Democratic Party will not quibble over efforts to slash social spending and turn the First Amendment into a dead letter.

The silence of the Democrats stands in sharp contrast to the mounting opposition among working people and broad sections of the population to the Trump administration’s rampage against democratic rights. This opposition must be consciously developed, for the Democrats’ prostration before Trump’s ongoing and escalating coup underscores the necessity for the working class to intervene independently into the political crisis, breaking with the corporate-controlled two-party system and launching a struggle on the basis of a socialist program.



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