

Trump declares war on American cities and the “enemy within”

Socialist Equality Party (US)

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Speaking before hundreds of generals and admirals assembled at a Marine Corps base outside Washington D.C., President Donald Trump and “Secretary of War” Pete Hegseth laid out a plan for establishing a presidential dictatorship in America. Trump told the military brass that they would play a central role in subduing his political opponents within the United States and that any officer who was unwilling to do so should immediately resign.

The Quantico spectacle was an attempt to build an American version of Hitler’s Waffen SS. And if White House deputy chief of staff Stephen Miller is playing the role of Trump’s Joseph Goebbels, then Hegseth is assuming the position of SS-*Obergruppenführer* Reinhard Heydrich, Hitler’s top military aide.

The focus of Trump’s address was to justify the widespread use of military force against American cities. “We’re going to straighten them out one by one,” Trump said, “and this is going to be a major part for some of the people in this room.” He added, “That’s a war too. It’s a war from within.”

Trump emphasized this point repeatedly. Last month, he said, he “signed an executive order to provide training for a quick reaction force that can help quell civil disturbances. This is going to be a big thing for the people in this room because it’s the enemy from within, and we have to handle it before it gets out of control.”

Trump has already begun implementing this policy with the deployment of the National Guard and Marines to Los Angeles, followed by the occupation of Washington D.C., the nation’s capital, by heavily armed federal agents and National Guard troops from a half-dozen Republican-controlled states. Over the weekend, the US president ordered federal forces to Portland, Oregon. National Guard troops are set to deploy to Memphis, Tennessee this week, and Trump told his military audience that Chicago would be next, while also mentioning San Francisco and New York as future targets.

In a particularly chilling remark, Trump said, referring to Hegseth, “I told Pete, we should use some of these cities as training grounds for our military—National Guard, but military.” What will this “training” consist of? The systematic extermination of popular protest and resistance to the policies of the Trump administration.

By emphasizing the role of the military in addition to the National Guard, Trump made clear that he was talking about the widespread deployment of active-duty military troops in American cities, an open violation of the Posse Comitatus Act.

Trump must be taken at his word. His invocation of “the enemy within” is a declaration of war on the American people, above all the working class. As the SEP wrote in a statement published on September 19, “it is necessary to put aside all self-deluding hopes that what is unfolding is anything less than a drive to establish a presidential dictatorship, based on the military, police, paramilitary forces and fascist gangs.”

The timing of Trump’s conclave with the generals, coinciding with the looming government shutdown, is not accidental. Trump intends to use the shutdown as a mechanism to massively restructure the American state and prepare an unprecedented assault on the working class. Moreover, if midterm elections are even held next year, they will take place under conditions of repression and militarization, in what will be, in effect, an occupied country.

In his remarks, which preceded Trump’s, Hegseth issued a series of directives aimed at completely subordinating the military to Trump’s personal control and the fascistic program of the administration. Some directives were aimed at giving US military forces free rein to slaughter civilians and commit other war crimes without fear of any repercussions, let alone criminal prosecution. Hegseth also proposed making it effectively impossible for female or minority soldiers to make allegations of sexual or racial abuse against their commanders.

There was an unmistakable element of racism in both Trump and Hegseth’s remarks. Hegseth railed against “woke garbage,” declaring, “We’re done with that shit.” Hegseth’s directives included several aimed at driving out minority soldiers, such as a ban on beards, which will affect black soldiers and those of Middle Eastern descent disproportionately.

In his references to the major cities, which vote heavily Democratic and have large African American and Hispanic populations, Trump denounced what he said were “careers”—that is, “career criminals.” He added, “You could send them to the finest schools, which they couldn’t get into anyway mentally... They’re, they’re career criminals. So I

don't know, maybe they were born that way. Some people don't like me to say that, but maybe they were."

At one point, in pondering the possibility of nuclear war, Trump said, "I call it the N-word. There are two N-words, and you can't use either of them." He added, in barely literate language, "If it does get to use, we have more than anybody else. We have better. We have newer."

One unprecedented aspect of Trump's speech was its open partisanship. Trump did not address the assembled generals and admirals as the commander in chief of the armed forces of the United States, but as the leader of a political party seeking their allegiance in the prosecution of a civil war against his domestic opponents.

He made repeated references to his own electoral victories, contrasting the "red" areas where he won the popular vote to the "blue" districts held by the Democratic Party, reduced, in his words, to scattered "strips and spots" (actually, the massive urban concentrations which are home to a majority of the American people).

The purpose of deploying the military, he made clear, was to eliminate those enclaves of political opposition, beginning with major Democratic-controlled cities. No American president has ever before addressed the military in this manner—as the political leader of one faction, calling on the generals to help secure his triumph over another.

This, combined with denunciations from Miller and others of the Democrats as "domestic extremists," makes all the more extraordinary the ongoing silence of the Democratic Party. Far from warning the population or mobilizing opposition, the Democrats have said virtually nothing about Trump's threats to unleash the armed forces on American cities.

Instead, the party remains fixated on prosecuting the US-NATO war against Russia and preparing confrontation with China, while promoting the illusion that the "guardrails" of American democracy—the courts, the military itself, the intelligence agencies—will somehow restrain Trump. Congressional leaders like Chuck Schumer and Hakeem Jeffries have ignored Trump's threats.

The supposed "left wing" of the party, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Bernie Sanders, have also been silent. Neither has said anything about the meeting of the generals. *Jacobin* magazine, the main publication associated with the Democratic Socialists of America, has also written nothing, in line with its editorial policy of saying as little as possible about the unprecedented assault on democratic rights in the US.

The Democrats fear that any serious exposure of Trump's plans would encourage the mass movement of workers and youth already emerging in opposition to war, austerity and inequality. In this way, the Democratic Party is complicit, playing its assigned role in the consolidation of authoritarian rule.

The events of the past month follow a definite class logic. The meeting with tech oligarchs earlier this month, the nonstop

denunciations of the "radical left," the deployment of National Guard troops into US cities, the fascistic frenzy whipped up over the killing of Charlie Kirk, the threat to militarily occupy Portland, Trump's speech before the military brass and the mass firings timed for the government shutdown all form part of a coordinated plan.

Every day that passes demonstrates not only the fascistic trajectory of Trump, but also the impotence of the Democratic Party and the absence of any constituency within the ruling class for basic democratic rights. The fight against dictatorship cannot be waged within the framework of the existing institutions.

In its September 19 statement, "Trump's fascist conspiracy and how to fight it: A socialist strategy," the Socialist Equality Party elaborated the organization, program and strategy for a movement against dictatorship. It called for the building of "a new form of organization that can unify the working class and mobilize its vast industrial and economic power against the Trump regime."

This new form of organization proposed by the Socialist Equality Party consists of rank-and-file committees. They must be established in every factory, workplace, school and neighborhood to organize resistance to Trump's dictatorship. These committees must become centers of resistance, uniting all sections of the working class (in industry, logistics, transport, restaurants and fast food, social services, legal defense, education, arts and culture, entertainment, medicine, health care, sciences, computer technology, programming and other highly specialized professions) and student youth against Trump's fascist government, the complicity of the Democrats, and the broader assault on democratic rights and living standards.

"The capitalist oligarchy has declared war on the working class," the SEP wrote. "The necessary response is the declaration of war by the working class on capitalism, which must result in the socialist reorganization of society." The fight for this program depends on the building of a socialist leadership. We call on all workers and young people who agree with this perspective to join the Socialist Equality Party.



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