

Operation Dictatorship: Trump is poised to invoke the Insurrection Act

Socialist Equality Party (US)
8 October 2025

President Donald Trump is poised to invoke the Insurrection Act, a measure that would give him sweeping powers to deploy the military across the United States under his personal control. The plan is a critical escalation in the ongoing conspiracy to establish a presidential dictatorship.

NBC News reported Wednesday—under the headline, “Trump administration officials seriously considering invoking Insurrection Act, sources say”—that, according to unnamed senior White House officials, “debate within the administration has shifted recently to more deeply exploring how and when the act might be invoked.” According to two White House sources, administration officials have gone so far as to “draft legal defenses and various options for invoking the act.”

The claim that the administration is merely “exploring” the invocation of the act is a transparent lie. In reality, the decision has already been made. NBC News quoted one White House official as saying that the move is not “imminent”—an effort to sow complacency. In fact, the administration is preparing to invoke the act in connection with definite actions, which may include mass arrests, the violent suppression of opposition and the deployment of federal troops in cities throughout the United States.

A White House statement provided further evidence that the decision to invoke the Insurrection Act has been taken: “The Trump administration is committed to restoring law and order in American cities that are plagued by violence due to Democrat mismanagement. And President Trump will not stand by while violent rioters attack federal law enforcement officers. The administration will work to protect federal assets and officers while making American cities safe again.”

The chronology of events makes clear that Trump is working off a schedule. On Monday, Trump said he would invoke the act “if it was necessary,” saying, if “courts were holding us up or governors or mayors were holding us up, sure, I’d do that.” White House aide Stephen Miller then called federal court rulings against the deployment of the National Guard to Oregon an “insurrection.”

Yesterday, Trump hosted an extraordinary “roundtable” meeting at the White House with far-right and fascist media personalities to discuss the necessary actions to crush “Antifa,” a catch-all term used to refer to opposition to the fascistic actions of the administration. Trump repeated his threat to arrest Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker and Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson.

The fascist spectacle, which was barely reported in the media, reached new depths when far-right propagandist Jack Posobiec

praised Trump for confronting “Antifa,” tracing its “various iterations” back “almost 100 years ... to the Weimar Republic in Germany.” By referencing Weimar, Posobiec drew a direct historical parallel between antifascist resistance to Hitler and current opposition to Trump’s dictatorship, lamenting that resistance to fascism had ever existed.

Right-wing media figures invited to the White House went so far as to label the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), a faction of the Democratic Party, as part of a vast “Antifa network.” Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem equated “Antifa” with “ISIS, Hezbollah, and Hamas,” while Attorney General Pam Bondi vowed to “destroy the entire organization from top to bottom.” That is, whoever is declared part of “Antifa” is to be arrested or killed.

The invocation of the Insurrection Act will be used to implement these plans. The 1807 act authorizes the president to deploy the military inside the United States to suppress “insurrections” and “rebellions.” Under the 1878 Posse Comitatus Act, the use of the military in domestic law enforcement is generally prohibited. The Insurrection Act stands as the principal exception.

In American history, the use of the Insurrection Act, aside from its invocation by Abraham Lincoln following the Confederacy’s attack on Fort Sumter in 1861, has been associated with instances of reactionary oppression. President Andrew Jackson used it in 1831 to crush Nat Turner’s slave rebellion.

In the aftermath of the Civil War, the Insurrection Act became a weapon against the labor movement: deployed against the Great Railroad Strike of 1877, the Pullman Strike of 1894, the coal miners’ struggles in Colorado and West Virginia, and the 1932 Bonus Army march of unemployed veterans on Washington.

Now, the Insurrection Act is being invoked on an unlimited national scale to preempt popular opposition and as a pretext for establishing a presidential dictatorship. Beyond suspending habeas corpus, there is no “legal” authority more sweeping than the Insurrection Act in the entirety of American law. Invoking the Act would mean the president would effectively assume de facto and de jure control over urban areas or entire states, essentially replacing the authority of local and state governments. By invoking the Act in Portland and Chicago, Trump would be placing them under the control of the military, over which he is commander-in-chief.

As a practical matter, if the Act is invoked in Portland or Chicago, the military would conduct arrests, set up checkpoints

and organize the detention of perceived enemies of the state. While the Insurrection Act itself does not provide the president with authority to override the federal judicial system, Trump will not observe legal formalities.

The response of the corporate media to Trump's preparations is one of silence and complicity. As of Wednesday evening, more than 24 hours after the NBC report that the White House is drafting legal justifications to invoke the Insurrection Act, there was no reference to the threat on the *New York Times* front page. The *Washington Post* and CNN likewise buried or ignored the story, even as 500 National Guard soldiers arrived in Chicago under federal command.

Among Democratic officials, the response has been no less evasive or cowardly. Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker, whose state is at the center of the federal military deployments, warned that Trump's actions are aimed at stealing the 2026 midterms and the 2028 presidential elections, and compared the administration's tactics to those of the Nazis. Yet even these statements have been ignored.

The congressional leadership, including Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer and House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, have said nothing about the moves to establish a dictatorship, maintaining a complete silence as Trump threatens and targets Democratic officials themselves.

Senator Bernie Sanders has also said as little as possible. On Wednesday, he posted a perfunctory statement acknowledging that Trump "is threatening to arrest elected officials and is moving this country to authoritarianism," adding, "We won't let you destroy our way of life." But what will Sanders, or the Democrats as a whole, actually do to stop the destruction of democratic rights? He proposed nothing.

The deliberate downplaying of these developments is itself a political act. Within the political establishment and from the Democratic Party, there is broad acceptance of Trump's course, either because they support it outright as a means of defending capitalist rule, or because they recognize that any serious opposition would require the mass mobilization of the working class, a prospect they fear far more than dictatorship itself.

As for the trade union apparatus, as hundreds of thousands of federal workers are being furloughed and the administration carries out a massive assault on jobs and social programs, it proposes nothing. "Do your damn job, and pass a budget that's going to require a little compromise," declared Randy Erwin, president of the National Federation of Federal Employees, reducing the historic attack on the working class to a plea for bipartisan cooperation with the coup regime.

There is broad and growing opposition to Trump's actions within the American population. Polls show that substantial majorities reject the deployment of troops to US cities and the criminalization of political dissent. Millions are preparing to take part in the upcoming "No Kings" demonstrations on October 18, with more than 2,100 protests already scheduled in cities and towns across the country. Trump is clearly horrified by the scale of this emerging mass opposition, and it is a major factor accelerating his timetable for dictatorship.

The time has come to pull off the blinders. Every warning issued

by the Socialist Equality Party about the preparations for dictatorship is being confirmed. Every day of this administration demolishes the pretense that the United States remains a functioning democracy. Capitalism can only be maintained through dictatorship. If this continues unchecked, it will be said that American democracy did not die with a bang, but with a whimper.

Trump is not acting on his own. He is the personification of the breakdown of capitalism under the weight of insoluble contradictions. His government represents the capitalist oligarchy in its most unvarnished form. The criminal underworld is now in control of the US government.

To halt this descent into dictatorship, the working class must intervene as an independent political and organizational force. Workers must begin forming rank-and-file committees in every workplace, school and neighborhood to defend their coworkers, resist layoffs and cuts and organize opposition to the military occupation of American cities. These committees must become centers of resistance, uniting all sections of the working class and linking their struggles into a coordinated offensive against dictatorship and social inequality.

The Socialist Equality Party fights to build and expand the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) to coordinate these efforts across industries and across borders. This global alliance provides the framework for uniting workers internationally against the common enemy—the capitalist oligarchy that is driving humanity toward dictatorship, war and poverty.

The growing anger over layoffs, the destruction of social programs and the militarization of society must be transformed into a conscious political movement against the entire system that produced Trump. The working class must advance its own program: the expropriation of the billionaires, the dismantling of the corporate and financial oligarchy and the reorganization of economic life on the basis of social need, not private profit. The defense of democratic rights is inseparable from the fight for socialism.



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact