

Trump, Hegseth step up military murders in Latin America

Patrick Martin
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US military forces struck two small boats off the Pacific coast of Colombia Wednesday, killing at least five people. The strikes were the eighth and ninth since President Trump issued orders September 2 for a campaign of military violence against alleged drug traffickers that is both illegal and unconstitutional.

While Trump claims that the strikes are justified because the United States is at war with drug cartels based in Latin America, the White House has not sought a declaration of war from Congress, or even a congressional resolution authorizing military operations, as in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The strikes are in flagrant violation of international law. The US government has offered no evidence against the people it is annihilating, and even their names are unknown. And the military assaults are taking place in international waters, where ships of any nationality supposedly have “freedom of navigation,” a right that Washington claims to be defending in the South China Sea.

The government of Colombia said the attacks amounted to “applying the death penalty in a territory that is not yours.” Deputy Foreign Minister Mauricio Jaramillo, speaking to the British Broadcasting Corporation, said the strikes were “disproportionate and outside international law.” There was “no process, no judicial order,” and those on board the small boats had “no possibility to defend themselves.”

US Secretary of War Pete Hegseth posted on X, “These strikes will continue, day after day. These are not simply drug runners—these are narco-terrorists ... There will be no refuge or forgiveness—only justice.” The post was accompanied by a video showing a boat catching fire after being hit by a bomb or missile. The video apparently shows a second strike on the debris, a technique known as a “double tap,” to maximize the

death toll and ensure against any survivors.

The attacks in the eastern Pacific represent an ominous escalation of the US military campaign against small boats in the Caribbean, which has been aimed at ratcheting up political and military pressure on the regime of President Nicolas Maduro in Venezuela. Last week Trump announced that he had authorized CIA covert operations against the Maduro government, which has been a target of both Democratic and Republican administrations in Washington.

On Thursday afternoon, Trump held an hour-long celebration of the murders in the cabinet room at the White House, gathering his top aides in the war on immigrants being conducted by the White House Homeland Security Task Force, under the coordination of deputy chief of staff and Homeland Security Advisor Stephen Miller. Trump and Miller were joined by Hegseth, Attorney General Pam Bondi, Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem, and FBI Director Kash Patel.

Trump gloated over the boat killings. Asked by a reporter why he didn’t seek a declaration of war from Congress, he replied, “I don’t think we’re going to necessarily ask for a declaration of war. I think we’re just going to kill people that are bringing drugs into our country. OK, we’re going to kill them, you know, they’re going to be like dead, OK.?”

After this boasting, in the style of a gangland boss, Trump repeated his most frequent lie of this month, claiming that every boat destroyed saved the lives of 25,000 Americans. The figure is bizarre. Given that the total number of Americans who died of drug overdoses has been averaging 100,000 a year, the destruction of nine boats has already saved more than twice the total drug death toll.

Like Hitler and Goebbels, Trump and his accomplices

believe that the bigger the lie, and the more often it is repeated, the better for them. They aim not to convince but to stupefy the public, and to intimidate anyone who might raise objections to this murderous international piracy.

Trump claimed “extraordinary historic achievements” by the Homeland Security task force, which he said was now operational in all 50 states. He pointed to sweeping anti-immigrant raids carried out by heavily armed federal agents, backed up by the mobilization of National Guard troops in Washington DC, Memphis and other cities. He reiterated threats to deploy troops in Chicago and Portland, Oregon, but said he would hold back from sending troops to San Francisco because of pleas from Silicon Valley billionaires.

Both Trump and Hegseth used the event to compare drug cartels to the Islamic State group in the Middle East, with Trump threatening attacks on land as well as on the sea, now that boat traffic on the Caribbean has been all but abandoned due to the danger of US missiles and drones. “Past administrations have tried to mitigate this threat,” Trump said, “and our objective is to eliminate it. We’re not mitigating. We’re eliminating.”

Hegseth spoke in similar homicidal terms, “Our message to these foreign terrorist organizations is we will treat you like we have treated al Qaeda. We will find you. We will map your networks. We will hunt you down, and we will kill you.”

Stephen Miller was the most brazen in his flattery of Trump: “Let me just say, Mr. President, that this country was going to die without you... The cartels were claiming more and more territory. City services were buckling. This was a country on the verge of dying, and you alone saved it.”

“President Trump is the only American leader, not just in our lifetimes but ever, to actually take the fight to the drug cartels to actually seek their eradication, and it is happening,” Miller gushed. “Only President Trump could have done this. And I will say one last thing, which is that his courage has been an inspiration to everyone else in this room. So President Trump, thank you for your leadership, your boldness, your courage, and your vision. We’re honored to serve underneath you.”

These words are worth quoting only to provide a

picture of the moral and intellectual depravity that is at the center of the White House and the leadership of the Trump administration as a whole.

Hegseth was also asked about criticism, largely from congressional Democrats, that the “war” against drug cartels was a distraction from the bigger challenges facing US imperialism, above all Russia and China. He declared, “We’re definitely keeping our eyes on near peer adversaries at the same time, but we think sending a message on these cartels, these narco terrorists is an important, important inside our hemisphere which for far too long other presidents, as the president pointed out, they’ve ignored our own backyard and allowed other countries to increase their influence here ...”

Asked directly about a Pentagon memo leaked to social media detailing the establishment of a National Guard response force, trained in suppressing “civil unrest,” to be deployed in all 50 states by April 2026, Hegseth indirectly confirmed the plans. “I’m not going to answer on something that may be in the planning process,” he said. “But we definitely do have multiple layers of National Guard response forces whether it’s in each state, whether it’s regionally ... whether it’s Washington DC.”

The statements of Trump and Hegseth demonstrate that the same methods of lawless violence being carried out against the population of Latin America are being implemented domestically within the United States.



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