

The fraud of a drawdown of immigrant police in Minnesota

Walz hails Homan as ICE shifts tactics in Minnesota

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Minnesota Governor Tim Walz and Trump administration “border czar” Tom Homan held consecutive press conferences Thursday morning announcing what they claimed was the end of “Operation Metro Surge,” the months-long federal occupation of Minnesota by thousands of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agents.

In reality, the operation is not ending but being reorganized, with Democratic state and local officials openly collaborating to deepen the integration of the immigration Gestapo into Minnesota’s police and jail system while intensifying the repression of opposition.

The announcements came just hours before the US Senate failed to advance a spending package to prevent a shutdown of the Department of Homeland Security. In the wake of the murders of Alex Patti and Renée Nicole Good, daily student walkouts and mass protests in Minneapolis, including growing calls for a general strike to abolish the immigration police and hold the fascists in Washington accountable, the Democrats have advanced a series of so-called “reforms” in exchange for their votes to keep these repressive agencies operating and fully funded. The dispute in Washington is not over abolishing ICE or CBP but over how these agencies are to be cosmetically regulated while their criminal operations continue uninterrupted.

In his remarks, Homan made clear that ICE agents are being redeployed into county and city jails across the state, where they will seize immigrants directly from police custody. Under this arrangement, immigrants who have not been convicted of any crime, including pretrial detainees, can be taken by ICE at the point of release and rapidly transferred out of state, cutting them off from lawyers, families and community support.

Homan, who repeatedly praised Democratic officials for their cooperation, emphasized that ICE now has “the ability to arrest criminal illegal aliens throughout the state in the jail when they are being released” and that federal officers have been strategically placed so local police do not have to “hold them unnecessarily.” He also boasted of commitments from state and local law enforcement to intervene aggressively against protests, declaring that police would “shut down unlawful agitator activity,” and lauding recent mass arrests carried out by Minnesota authorities.

“What you saw this past weekend, law enforcement is responding to public safety needs quickly, and people were arrested for violating city ordinances, you know, unlawful assembly and so forth,” Homan said.

Throughout his remarks, Homan made no reference whatsoever to the murder of Renée Nicole Good and Alex Patti by federal agents. Instead, he repeatedly invoked “criminal aliens,” “agitators” and “public safety.” Threatening to murder more ICE-watch observers and protesters, Homan said he and heavily militarized “quick reaction forces,” or “QRFs,” would

remain in Minnesota over the coming days.

Walz, speaking after Homan and acknowledging that he had communicated with him in advance, described the federal operation as an “unprecedented federal invasion in all aspects of life” and “unlike anything we have witnessed.” Yet even as he acknowledged the sweeping scale of the occupation, Walz sought to recast its violence as a matter of poor training and tone rather than purpose. Referring to Homan’s announcement, Walz declared that he was “cautiously optimistic” that the “surge of untrained, aggressive federal agents are going to leave Minnesota.”

The CBP agents who executed Alex Patti, as well as the ICE agent who shot Renée Good in the head as she was fleeing, were not “untrained” but veteran officers. The problem is not a lack of training but the class function of these forces. ICE and CBP exist to enforce state violence, intimidate immigrant communities and suppress resistance by the working class as a whole, regardless of immigration status, a reality underscored by the murders of Good and Patti.

Walz went on to lavish praise on Homan, repeatedly emphasizing that he was able to have a “conversation” with him and commending his “consistency.” Walz contrasted Homan favorably with other Trump administration figures, explaining that after the murders and widespread public outrage, the administration needed to “save face.” According to Walz, Homan “called me” and “followed through,” revealing that the supposed drawdown is the product of negotiations aimed at managing political fallout.

Significantly, Walz delivered his remarks surrounded by business owners, not workers. His focus was on “economic recovery” and the need to “move forward,” underscoring that the primary concern of the Democratic Party is the stabilization of commerce and the suppression of unrest, not the defense of democratic rights or the protection of immigrants and workers.

The essence of Trump and Homan’s conditions for a drawdown was collaboration by the Democratic Party with the immigration operation. Trump and Walz held a phone call on January 26 that the governor’s office called “productive” with an aim to “reduce the number of federal agents in Minnesota” and called for “a more coordinated fashion on immigration enforcement.”

The first payment to the Trump administration by Walz was to order the Minnesota State Patrol along with other state and county departments to carry out a mass arrest of protesters at the Bishop Henry Whipple Federal Building on February 7 that has been the main headquarters for ICE and CBP operations, as well as a holding facility for abducted immigrants slated for deportation.

Referencing the mass arrests in what could be taken to be a compliment to Walz and the Democratic Party in Minnesota, acting ICE Director Todd

Lyons stated in testimony before Congress, “We’ve seen a deescalation in protests, so our agents can do their intelligence-driven enforcement operations. Just the other night, local law enforcement arrested 54 protesters and ICE officers didn’t have to be engaged.”

Besides the crackdown on protest, the other aspect of the pact with Trump is the cooperation of state law enforcement with Homan’s goons to continue Operation Metro Surge. Homan hopes to reduce ICE’s presence in Minnesota from the current 2,300 agents to the original 150 agents before the surge.

In reality, Trump and Homan are counting on Minnesota state law enforcement to relieve them so they can send ICE and CBP forces elsewhere in the country. According to the website WIRED, which obtained federal records, “Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) have carried out a secret campaign to expand ICE’s physical presence across the US. Documents show that more than 150 leases and office expansions have or would place new facilities in nearly every state, many of them in or just outside of the country’s largest metropolitan areas. In many cases, these facilities, which are to be used by street-level agents and ICE attorneys, are located near elementary schools, medical offices, places of worship, and other sensitive locations.”

The scale of the occupation in Minnesota has been staggering. And it continues despite the effort of the national media to divert attention elsewhere. Less than 48 hours before Homan and Walz’s press conference, plain-clothed ICE agents chased and tackled an 18-year-old through the lobby of the Hennepin County Government Center as lawyers, family members and court observers looked on. The young man, later identified as Junior de Jesus Herrera Berrios, was in the courthouse for a hearing when federal agents pursued him through the public space, slammed him to the floor, handcuffed him and marched him out of the building under escort amid whistles, shouts and demands to see a warrant.

The arrest of immigrants, separation of families, physical and mental abuse in detention centers, the lack of hygienic conditions and no access to medical assistance have been ongoing. The abuses are so flagrant that U.S. District Judge Nancy E. Brasel granted a temporary restraining order on February 12 halting aspects of the government’s conduct at the Bishop Henry Whipple Federal Building.

Currently, ICE is patrolling school bus stops and detaining parents as they drop off their children. They are beating up observers. The simple act of honking a horn to warn immigrants of ICE’s presence leads to detention. Protesters are manhandled.

Hospital workers report people showing up beaten with bruises, broken bones and concussions. ICE agents demand to ride in ambulances to accompany those they have beaten. They invade patients’ hospital rooms and take pictures of their victims.

ICE agents are scanning vehicle license plates and the faces of demonstrators. Protesters approached by ICE have been called by their names. Other protesters have had ICE agents show up at their homes, all indicating the federal government is building up a database of those who oppose the government crackdown.

A store owner, who in a media interview criticized ICE operations, found two federal agents turning up within hours to announce an audit of employee records.

The Department of Justice is threatening to charge observers who “track, surveil, or share” the locations of federal officers with felony charges for obstruction.

Speaking at Walz’s press conference earlier this week, two restaurant owners reported their sales have declined by 50 to 80 percent since the surge began in December. The Minneapolis-St. Paul metro region is honeycombed with ethnic restaurants, touted for their cuisine. They are unable to pay sales tax, rent or employees’ wages. Many have been forced to close their doors.

Minneapolis Director of Community Planning and Economic Development Erik Hansen, crunching new data, says the city is losing upwards of \$20 million every week.

Workers, who have seen their lives upended and are unable to work because of the federal dragnet, are unable to pay rent. Many are proposing a rent moratorium to prevent workers from being evicted. But Minnesota Public Radio, quoting Walz’s office, said that “the governor is open to exploring all avenues to helping people, but he does not currently have the legal authority to enact an eviction moratorium.”

Minneapolis City Council President Elliott Payne has been more forthright about the real state of affairs in the Democratic Party in Minnesota. “I don’t feel like I’m doing enough, I don’t feel like the Mayor’s doing enough, I don’t feel like the Governor’s doing enough. It’s been our community that’s actually been the vanguard of opposition to this complete lawless operation.”

Since the mass arrests at the Whipple building, many protesters have called Walz a “sellout.” But the truth of the situation is that with the deepening crisis of the capitalist system, the true nature of the Democratic Party is further revealed. It is a capitalist party. Its priority is not to defend the working class against the dangers of Trump’s fascist onslaught. It is to defend the interests of the financial oligarchy, come what may.

Walz has frequently characterized “Operation Metro Surge” as “a federal retribution campaign” against himself and Minnesota. But for the Trump administration, the surge is only the first stage—first, they came for the immigrants.

The reality is that the breakdown of the capitalist system necessitates the establishment of dictatorship. The United States is losing its preeminent position in the global economy. It must impose ever greater levels of impoverishment on the working class to salvage capitalist rule, and this cannot be done democratically.

The Trump administration is grooming ICE and CBP in the style of Hitler’s Brownshirts to be used to crush working class resistance. The role of the Democratic Party is to conceal this conspiracy against the working class.

The only progressive force on the entire planet that can combat the rise of fascism is the international working class. Across the United States, workers must create new organizations—rank-and-file committees—to forge the unity of American workers with their class brothers and sisters throughout the world against the specter of war and dictatorship.



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