

Ford brings K-9 units into Michigan Assembly, as UAW-backed surveillance regime intensifies

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11 August 2026

The report of a pilot program by Ford Motor Company to bring dogs trained to sniff for guns and explosives into the Michigan Assembly Plant (MAP) in Wayne, Michigan, is the latest escalation in a management drive to intimidate and discipline autoworkers.

What has been presented as a campaign against guns, drugs and other prohibited items is in reality part of a campaign by the auto companies, with the collusion of the United Auto Workers, to impose a police state atmosphere in the auto plants.

At Michigan Assembly, management is continuing a 90-day pilot program, launched July 20, that places K-9 teams trained to detect firearms and explosives inside the factory. This is being done with the explicit support of the UAW apparatus.

Ford says the initiative was “part of a broader effort to explore emerging security technologies and best practices across Ford facilities.” The company did not specify a reason that MAP had been chosen.

Scott Elliott, shop chairman of UAW Local 900 at MAP, sent a memo to members defending the program, claiming it was part of an effort by Ford to maintain a safe workplace. Ford, he said, plans “to collect data using a trained K-9 unit that is specifically trained to detect firearms, ammunition, and explosives. The K-9 involved in this pilot is not trained to detect narcotics or marijuana.”

Elliott has acted as a public apologist for the company’s ever-expanding security crackdown, telling the *Detroit Free Press* back in February 2025: “If you bring a gun in here, you’re getting fired, period. If you bring pot in here, you’re fired, period.”

One worker denounced the use of firearm-sniffing dogs, posting on Facebook, “[I]t’s the 1914 Henry Ford sociological department all over again! The UAW forgot where they came from and why we have a union in the first place. Also Ford doesn’t investigate anything, they have [P]inkerton do it. And nothing leaves the plant ... everything stays in house ... i have seen workers with 30+ yrs seniority get fired over social media posts [that] were 3,4 & 5 yrs old!!!! But the spc harrasing women just gets (sh)oved to another factory.”

Another Ford worker posted, “The problem with the ‘discipline’ is that it’s not keeping anything safe or making production more efficient. It’s hostile and a sign in my eyes that Ford is not only in a bad financial spot but they are willing to make enemies with its workers and still expect profits.”

The real attitude of Ford and the UAW bureaucracy for workers’ safety was demonstrated last month when they forced workers to labor in smoke-filled factories as Canadian wildfires left Detroit with the worst air quality on the planet. The *Detroit Free Press* reported that several dozen MAP workers went to the plant’s medical unit, and at least 10 were taken out on stretchers by ambulance to hospitals.

Since the UAW’s fraudulent “stand-up” strike of 2023, the auto companies have exploited terms of sellout contract agreements to impose mass layoffs, forced overtime, speed-up and widespread victimizations and firings under a zero-tolerance regime that precludes grievances and appeals. Workers are being fired “right and left,” as one rank-and-file worker at the Dearborn Truck Plant told the *World Socialist Web Site*. And the UAW apparatus has not lifted a finger to defend a single worker.

The stepped up security measures at Michigan Assembly have been accompanied by increased harassment and the unjustified termination of workers across Ford plants nationwide. At Ford’s Kansas City Assembly Plant (KCAP), the shop chairman has reportedly filed a National Labor Relations Board charge in response to rank-and-file anger over the company’s “zero-tolerance” policy, which has been wielded to aggressively pursue disciplinary terminations. But the union has done nothing to oppose the security regime itself.

In another well publicized incident, a skilled trades worker at the Ford Kentucky Truck Plant was recently fired for allegedly taking a cookie without paying. The *Detroit Free Press* reported that at least three Michigan Assembly workers, who were recently fired over alleged snack thefts, have now been reinstated.

These recent events highlight developments that the *World Socialist Web Site* was the first to expose over 18 months ago: the transformation of US auto factories into sites of police state surveillance, with the collaboration of the UAW bureaucracy.

In January 2025, the WSWWS was the first publication to report on Ford’s Global Security Task Force, a highly secretive operation headed by Scott Vogel, a 23-year veteran of the US Secret Service. On January 31, 2025, police brought K-9 units into MAP to search workers on both shifts. Three workers were terminated on the spot. No illegal drugs or weapons were found.

Starting in February 2025, Ford brought police and K-9 units into the Ford Dearborn Truck Plant and Rouge Electric Vehicle

Center to allegedly search for drugs, firearms and other prohibited items.

Within weeks, the crackdown had expanded to the historic Rouge Complex, where UAW Local 600 unit President Nick Kottalis alerted workers via social media that “the company is coming in with tracking dogs and security teams to clean out any marijuana, illegal activity, alcohol, everything from all the plants in North America.” Not a word of opposition—The union bureaucrat simply acted as the company’s messenger boy. Kottalis was replaced in recent elections, but the policy of collusion with the company remains.

By September 2025, workers at Ford’s Dearborn Truck Plant were reporting unannounced searches of employees’ belongings, with multiple suspensions and terminations involving workers who refused to submit to searches. Searches also began at Ford Chicago Assembly

In September 2025, Stellantis began deploying gun-sniffing security dogs at its Sterling Heights Assembly Plant (SHAP), one of the company’s largest plants. In April the company announced that it would begin expanding those patrols to Detroit Assembly Complex—Mack, the Toledo Assembly Complex and Warren Truck just outside Detroit.

The Stellantis security rollout at Sterling Heights Assembly Plant (SHAP) confirms that what began at Ford is metastasizing across the industry. SHAP has been a center of rank-and-file opposition for years. Workers there staged a work stoppage over COVID-19 in 2020 and mounted determined resistance to a mandatory 12-hour, 7-day week for skilled trades in 2021.

The expanding police state-style regime inside the auto plants takes place amid signs of growing militancy. At Nexteer Automotive in Saginaw, Michigan, workers voted down three successive UAW-backed contracts. At Bridgewater Interiors in Warren, Michigan, workers rejected a sellout tentative agreement, as did Dana workers at 14 plants in the US Midwest and South.

At American Axle in Three Rivers, Michigan, nearly 1,000 workers voted by 98 percent to authorize a strike and walked out, the first strike since the bitter 87-day strike of 2008 when the UAW colluded with the company to slash wages from \$29 to \$14.50 an hour.

Behind the security dragnet lies the drive to place American industry on a war footing, which requires the disciplining of autoworkers, historically one of the most militant sections of the American working class. The UAW apparatus is preparing to enforce labor discipline as the plants are integrated into the war machine, as shown by the meeting between Pentagon officials and auto executives last April about converting auto factories to war production as part of Trump’s fascist “Arsenal of Freedom.”

UAW President Shawn Fain has made no secret of his support for enlisting autoworkers behind the US war drive. In March 2025, he appeared on CBS’s *Face the Nation* to again promote converting auto plants for military production, waxing nostalgic about the World War II propaganda slogan of building the “Arsenal of Democracy.”

Fain’s support for militarism and economic nationalism, signaled by his embrace of Trump’s tariffs and scapegoating of Mexican workers, is the political counterpart to the intimidation

and regimentation now being imposed inside the plants. The UAW’s incessant promotion of militarism and American nationalism seeks to pit workers in the US against their working class brothers and sisters overseas while providing the ideological cover for enforcing police state measures at home. Far from opposing the drive to war, the UAW seeks a seat at the table, a role in the corporate state as enforcer of labor discipline for American imperialism.

The alternative is the independent mobilization of the rank and file. At the UAW Constitutional Convention in Detroit in June, Mack Trucks worker and socialist Will Lehman was nominated for UAW president on a program of abolishing the bureaucracy and transferring power to rank-and-file committees. His campaign, which denounces what he terms the US “Arsenal of Genocide,” advances an explicitly internationalist program: opposition to both capitalist parties, defense of immigrant workers, and solidarity with workers in Mexico, Canada and across the world.

The Ford Workers Rank-and-File Committee stated in its February 2025 declaration: “No matter what the bureaucrats from Solidarity House or the locals say, we do not give up our Constitutional rights when we walk into the plant. Under the Fourth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, no agency of the government, no company nor individual has the right to conduct unreasonable searches and seizures of our property or our persons, no matter where they may occur.”

The committee demanded the immediate removal of all tracking dogs and police from every auto plant—from MAP to SHAP, from the Rouge to KCAP and beyond; an end to warrantless searches and undercover agents on the shop floor; the reinstatement of every worker fired under these unconstitutional measures with full back pay and no penalty.

The International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) provides the organizational framework. Only through the independent mobilization of the working class, on the basis of a socialist and internationalist program, can the drive to war be stopped and the police state measures now being imposed in the factories be rolled back.

As the Ford Workers Rank-and-File Committee declared: “We are not going back to the conditions of industrial slavery, enforced by Ford’s Servicemen goons, that existed before our fathers and grandfathers built the union.” The fight against tracking dogs and undercover police is the fight to defend the very possibility of working class organization—a fight that must be waged and won in every plant, independent of the UAW apparatus, by the rank and file themselves.



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