

Truckers' blockade shakes both US and Mexican governments: build binational rank-and-file committees

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21 September 2026

This month's courageous blockade of the Mexicali–Calixico commercial crossing by Mexican truck drivers protesting the mass revocation of their B-1 visas was an opening shot against the Trump administration's crackdown on immigrants, facilitated by the Sheinbaum government.

For four days, over 300 drivers parked their trucks at the commercial crossing lanes, holding up an estimated \$800 million per day in cargo—costing corporations some \$150 million daily—and sent both governments into crisis mode. Drivers were protesting the mass revocation of 25,000 B-1 work visas from commercial drivers along Mexico's northern border. Some 19,000 of them are binational B-1 truckers who cross daily. Sixty percent of those affected are from Mexicali and 40 percent from Tijuana and Tecate, according to the National Chamber of Freight Transport (CANACAR).

Federal authorities, including US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and the US Department of Transportation, accused the drivers of violating cabotage laws—rules that historically bar B-1 drivers from moving a container between two points both within the United States. They transport either components or finished goods which have been loaded at a Mexican facility and deliver it to manufacturers, retailers, distribution centers, and warehouses across the US, a fact of which most are entirely unaware.

The blockade was lifted Sunday, September 6, on the basis of a single closed-door meeting between Mexican state officials, business organizations and a handful of “representatives” for the drivers.

The drivers have refuted the charge that they committed cabotage and demanded a clear explanation of what rules they broke to be stripped of their visas and livelihoods. They warned: “If we don't see that things have progressed and visas continue to be withdrawn left and right, we will take action again ... and next time it will be a little more organized and much bigger.”

Despite the promises, on the first business day after the blockade ended, drivers reported that ICE revoked up to 20 more visas.

The clarification the workers demanded has since been provided, and the arbitrary new categories make clear that “cabotage” is not a set of standards but a mechanism for criminalizing the ordinary requirements of the job.

Under the new rules, a driver may not return to Mexico on foot after entering with a loaded trailer, may not leave his truck if the trailer remains in the US more than three hours and may not change trailers or trucks for any reason. They may not stay with relatives while making a week-long trip across the United States. Even stopping to rest at a Walmart may be grounds for revocation. Enforcement reaches back two years and further: workers are being punished today for conduct never before named as a violation.

The workers answered with the contempt the rules deserve. “If you breathe gringo air it's cabotage,” one wrote. “Going to Love's to take a shower is cabotage.” Another added: “You forgot to add that getting out to take a sh** is cabotage.”

These rules are at the discretion of fascistic immigration officers working to meet the growing deportation quotas—ICE arrested some 50,000 people a month over the summer or about 1,600 per day while the administration is pressuring the organization to double these numbers.

The war on immigrants

The visa revocations must be seen as one front in a coordinated offensive against the international working class. The protests must broaden into a wider fight against ICE arrests, deportations, world war, genocide and the capitalist system that produces these.

The revocation of B-1 visas is part of the same campaign producing the Non-Domiciled CDL Final Rule, which will strip roughly 200,000 immigrant truck drivers of their licenses, along with the mass revocation of CDL training-center accreditations and the sudden enforcement of English-proficiency requirements never before applied.

Asked about the revocations, Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum replied that granting or withdrawing a visa is “a sovereign decision of a State,” and that “the United States can give or not give a visa; we cannot intervene in the policy it defines.” This is the Mexican government's declaration that it will carry out Washington's dictates.

Rather than defending migrants against Trump, Sheinbaum is imposing on Mexico's side of the border the repression Trump demands. Her occasional verbal shots at Trump are staged for public consumption: in December 2024 she assured Trump the caravans would “not reach the northern border,” in February 2025 she deployed 10,000 additional National Guard troops to border cities and in August 2025 she ordered the arrest of the immigrant-rights activist Luis Rey García Villagrán.

The “spokesman” of the drivers

Alan Verdugo has emerged as the principal “spokesman” for the movement in Mexico. The facts about Verdugo must be stated plainly. He is a Mexican truck driver with a large TikTok following—some 69,000 followers. While not a B-1 binational driver, his “mandate” comes not

from a democratic appointment by the rank and file but from his social-media clout.

Verdugo has clearly been tapped within the closed-door meetings to discipline the movement. He has circulated a seven-year-old customs-broker video teaching the cabotage rules and spent his nightly broadcasts instructing drivers to obey them. He has told drivers to avoid the Calexico crossing rather than to fight the regime that makes it a trap and has presented the state's own procedural formalities—the “supervisor review” that was already a legal requirement—as “victories.” He has also monetized the struggle, insisting “everything I do is totally free” while soliciting “gifts, flowers, hats, donations” and followers.

Most revealing is the company he keeps. Verdugo has sought meetings with Taylor Farms and Church Brothers, “in hopes of having them act as spokesmen for the truckers.” Taylor Farms, the agribusiness giant based in Salinas, California with \$7 billion in annual revenue, donated \$1 million to Trump's MAGA Inc. super PAC in 2025 and has directed more than \$3.8 million to Republican-aligned committees this decade. It is the same company whose shredded lettuce poisoned thousands in this summer's cyclosporiasis outbreak and which has caused repeated pathogen outbreaks since 2013 without ever facing a penalty.

Most significantly, Verdugo announced the formation that he and his associates would try to launch a “trade union” for the truckers, the “Coalición de Operadores 5ta Rueda” (Coalition of Fifth-Wheel Operators). This is not the result of Verdugo acting alone. The Sheinbaum government and the Mexican state are moving to channel the drivers' movement into the official union apparatus as a means of restoring labor discipline.

As in the United States and throughout the world, the Mexican union bureaucracies are tasked with straightjacketing workers into contracts and enforcing no-strike clauses to ensure no wildcat action such as this blockade ever recurs. With the blockade having demonstrated that the rank-and-file drivers can, on their own initiative, bring cross-border commerce to a halt, the state, CANACAR and the corporatist union bureaucracies tied to Sheinbaum's Morena party are seeking to bring the B-1 drivers under the unions' thumb—to contain and demobilize them precisely at the moment their independent action has revealed the enormous strategic power of the working class over the critical logistics of both economies.

The experience of Rogel Aguilera-Mederos stands as a prime example of what the ruling class fears. In December 2021, the 26-year-old Cuban immigrant truck driver was sentenced to 110 years in prison for a crash on a Colorado mountain pass caused by brake failure on his truck which was owned by a Houston company cited for violations.

Outraged truck drivers across the country mounted a boycott of Colorado under the slogan “No Trucks to Colorado,” which within a month forced Governor Jared Polis to cut the sentence to ten years. That episode demonstrated the enormous power of the working class when it acts collectively and independently. It is precisely this power that the Mexican state, the employers and the union bureaucracies are now seeking to strangle by dragging the B-1 drivers into unions whose function is not to defend them but to discipline them.

Verdugo spews a Mexican variety of the same nationalist poison promoted by Trump and his fascistic cabinet. Asked about the crackdown, Verdugo answered: “The problem is with the damn Hindus. Five guys go in one truck and only one has a license. And they all drive with their feet up on the truck. All stinking.”

The xenophobic attacks on Indian and Sikh drivers originate first and foremost with the Trump administration, whose DHS social media post vilifying Punjabi Sikh drivers—featuring Optimus Prime staring down an Indian man with the phrases “America for Americans” and “Self-deport or find out”—was followed within a week by the brutal stabbing of a Sikh truck driver at a Wyoming rest stop.

Verdugo and the nationalist trade unions share the racist sentiments of Trump and the far right. While the lion's share of guilt lies with the Trump administration, Verdugo and all who repeated this poison also have blood on their hands. Such politics must be fought against with the contempt it deserves.

Drivers must throw out Verdugo and democratically elect their own leadership on the political principles of international working-class unity, and not social-media clout. Tellingly, Verdugo has yet to respond to the brutal stabbing having fueled the flames himself.

Immigrants of all ethnicities are being scapegoated to attack democratic rights and due process, and to construct the massive prisons and torture cages revealed at Alligator Alcatraz—cages tested on immigrants today that will tomorrow be used to hold US citizens, youth and workers as they come into conflict with the Trump administration.

The experience of the Matamoros workers in 2019 is an indispensable lesson. There, 70,000 maquiladora workers rose in wildcat strikes against the employers, the state and the gangster-ridden or *charro* unions—and were defeated not by the police or the companies alone, but by a leadership that steered the struggle back into legal channels. Similarly to how Verdugo intervened, labor lawyer Susana Prieto arrived in Matamoros, having a large social media presence, and monopolized the microphones at mass assemblies.

At a time when workers were widely discussing the internationalist program of the *World Socialist Web Site* and even marched to the US border to call on American workers to join their struggle, Prieto promoted a nationalist orientation, along with the lies that new “independent” unions would differ from the old unions and that President Andrés Manuel López Obrador would support their struggle. Prieto ended by joining the ruling Morena party—the same party whose government sent troops against the workers. The Matamoros rebellion posed the same question the truckers now face: independent workers' power and internationalism or the state-sponsored and nationalist unions?

And the struggle is spreading. In Piedras Negras, truckers are threatening to blockade the Eagle Pass crossing over the Mexican government's ban on empty trucks returning across the border, which affects 30 percent of crossings. At the Cucupah checkpoint in San Luis Río Colorado, lines of trailers stretch five kilometers.

This movement is neither local or national, but international—and it will not be contained by the “diplomatic channels” that Verdugo and the business councils have constructed. Across the United States, truckers are discussing on social media a strike on October 1 to oppose rising fuel costs.

The drivers must link their struggle to the workers on the other side of the border and beyond it. American truckers, warehouse workers and port workers face the same employers and the same state, and they themselves must come to the defense of the Mexican and Indian workers. The campaign of Will Lehman—the Mack Trucks worker running for UAW president on a rank-and-file program against the union bureaucracy—points the way forward. The Mexican and the American driver are divided by a border that serves only their exploiters. A program of socialist internationalism, of international working-class unity, is what must be fought for.



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