

Trump planning nationwide military round-up of 10,000 immigrants

By Eric London
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The *Washington Post* reported Tuesday that the Trump administration is considering conducting a nationwide militarized sweep to arrest 10,000 immigrants.

Citing seven current and former administration officials, the *Post* calls it “a secret White House plan to arrest thousands of parents and children in a blitz operation against migrants in 10 major US cities,” including New York, Los Angeles and Chicago. The *Post* says the remaining target cities are “the other largest destinations for Central America migrants,” which likely includes Washington DC; the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Area in California; Houston, Texas, and Miami, Florida.

Such a mass operation would require the deployment of thousands of armed federal police and agents. Units would fan out across working class neighborhoods, storming into immigrants’ homes, grabbing them off the street, seizing them at their jobs or at school, and dispatching them to internment camps to be held for deportation. It would require checkpoints, illegal searches and the deployment of helicopters, paddy wagons and armored assault vehicles. The *Post* indicates that children as well as parents would be targeted for arrest.

The plan would not only constitute the largest immigration raid in US history, it would serve as a dry run for the mass round-up of strikers, protesters and other dissidents. Those planning such a massive operation doubtless conceive of it in this way.

Each police state operation conducted by the state against immigrant workers serves both to whip up anti-immigrant sentiment and normalize wholesale violations of democratic rights, dulling and conditioning popular consciousness for the imposition of dictatorial forms of rule.

Since several of the targeted cities are “sanctuary cities,” where police are not allowed to participate in immigration raids, it is possible that the implementation of the plan would require the deployment of soldiers in working class neighborhoods. Last year, Trump deployed over 5,000 active-duty troops to the US-Mexico border in a clear violation of the principle of *posse comitatus*, which bars the military from conducting domestic police operations.

According to the *Post*, the plan was temporarily tabled several weeks ago by then-Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen and then-acting Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) head Ron Vitiello. However, it is still being actively planned and discussed, according to the newspaper.

The *Post* article makes clear that Vitiello and Nielsen, who oversaw the forced separation of parents from their children in 2018, opposed the measure “not as a result of ethical concerns about arresting families.” Rather, they expressed concerns over “the risk of public outrage.”

Regardless, Trump dismissed Nielsen and Vitiello in April partly in response to their concerns. In firing Nielsen and announcing he was withdrawing Vitiello’s name as permanent ICE director, Trump explained he wanted to take a “tougher” route in cracking down on immigration. The plan’s most ardent supporters—White House aide Stephen Miller and ICE Deputy Director Matthew Albence—remain at their posts.

Last Thursday, former ICE Director Tom Homan said on *Fox News* that ICE should “do operationally what Congress has failed to do legislatively,” i.e., carry out paramilitary, illegal operations on behalf of the executive branch. “ICE needs to do a nationwide

operation,” he said.

The readers’ comments on the *Washington Post* article are overwhelmingly hostile. One reader wrote, “Open your Eyes America. Are we really the America our ancestors fought for? These policies by the Administration and the GOP are implementing Hitler and Nazi Germany tactics.”

A top comment read: “My God. This sounds more and more like Hitler’s fascism. Round them up, put them in a railroad car, and see what happens.” A second top commenter wrote, “The only way to accurately describe Stephen Miller is a vile Hitler wannabe.” Referring to Nielsen and Vitiello’s phony opposition, another wrote, “maybe they just heard about the Nuremberg trials.”

The US military has been preparing for years for the likelihood of domestic police operations in a major US city. In April 2013, entire sections of Boston were placed under de facto martial law and the Bill of Rights effectively suspended as police and federal agents went house to house searching for the persons responsible for the Boston Marathon bombing.

In August of 2014, the town of Ferguson, Missouri, was occupied by the National Guard, state troopers and an army of assault rifle-toting riot police, backed by attack dogs, armored vehicles and helicopters following the police murder of 18-year-old Michael Brown.

More recently, in February 2019, the military conducted a week long training exercise at the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach as well as in downtown Los Angeles. The Army said of the unannounced drills: “[T]he local terrain and training facilities in Los Angeles provide the Army with unique locations and simulate urban environments the service members may encounter when deployed overseas.”

The US is preparing for urban operations not only overseas, but domestically as well. A 2016 report from the US Army War College titled “Military Contingencies in Megacities and Sub-Megacities” notes that “the United States will find itself at some point in the not-too-distant future engaged in military contingencies in large cities.”

Citing concerns over the prospect of mass civilian casualties, the military document states: “Such cautions notwithstanding, an inhibition cannot be allowed to become a prohibition. If there is a highly compelling strategic rationale for action, the United States might

not have the luxury of avoiding the dangers of an urban contingency.”

The authors add that “the urban dilemma” involves “a risk of insecurity among the urban poor” due to “class conflict.” They acknowledge that “such operations could even take place within the continental United States, as demonstrated by the Los Angeles riots and the responses to Hurricane Katrina and Superstorm Sandy.”

The ongoing plans to conduct nationwide raids of immigrant neighborhoods must be viewed by all workers and youth as a threat to the democratic rights of the entire population, regardless of immigration status. What the government is able to establish as a norm against impoverished Central American victims of US imperialism will soon be applied to the entire working class.

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