

US to jail 1,400 immigrant children at WWII Japanese internment site

By Eric London
13 June 2019

The Pentagon has announced that the Trump administration will detain 1,400 immigrant children at the site of a World War II-era Japanese internment camp, Fort Sill Army Base in Lawton, Oklahoma.

The decision, announced Tuesday as Trump denounced immigrants and socialism at a rally in Iowa, is a calculated political maneuver.

“Immigration really is the defining issue of 2020,” Trump said in Des Moines shortly after the Pentagon announcement. “When it comes to immigration, Democrats no longer represent American citizens... The Democratic Party is really now the socialist party.”

The decision to re-open the internment camp at Fort Sill is a further milestone in the breakdown of democratic forms of rule and a sign that the government is reviving the worst crimes in American history as official state policy. It is a signal to Trump’s extreme right-wing supporters that the government is prepared to enact more openly dictatorial forms of rule.

“It’s a gut punch to us to repeat history like this,” David Inoue, executive director of the Japanese American Citizens League, told the *World Socialist Web Site*.

“Those who were incarcerated under Japanese internment often return to the camps on pilgrimages to demand that such places be recognized for the egregious wrongs that took place there. Now, further injustices will be happening at these same locations. The trauma inflicted on these immigrant children will last for generations.”

Fort Sill housed some 700 Japanese-Americans, including US citizens and first-generation immigrants, known as *issei*, during World War II. During Japanese internment, Fort Sill was known for its fierce windstorms and its unbearably hot temperatures. Average highs in July are 97 degrees Fahrenheit.

Between 1942 and 1946, the US government jailed 120,000 people at internment camps across the country without trial. Internment was initiated via Democratic President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Executive Order 9066 on February 12, 1942.

Mass internment had been statutorily “legalized” by the Alien Registration Act of 1940—also known as the Smith Act. Months before the mass internment of Japanese-Americans began, the act was first used to prosecute 29 members of the Socialist Workers Party during the Minneapolis Sedition Trial of 1941. The trial ended less than eight weeks before Executive Order 9066 when 18 Trotskyists were sentenced to federal prison for opposing US intervention in World War II.

Fort Sill was the site of one of the many murders conducted by US Army prison guards during internment. The *Encyclopedia of Japanese American Internment* explains:

“On May 12, 1942, Kanesaburo Oshima, a barber from the island of Hawaii, climbed the outer barbed-wire fence in broad daylight reportedly shouting, ‘I want to go home!’ A guard barked out a warning, while another shot Oshima dead in front of his friends who had urged they be allowed to help him get down from the fence and return to the camp. Oshima was depressed, his friends revealed. He had been forced to leave his wife and 12 children who had little means of support.”

Oshima’s funeral “was attended by all of Fort Sill’s Japanese Americans. Also present were Army guards with machine guns pointed at the mourners because they feared an uprising.”

In *Life Behind Barbed Wire*, an internee recalled, “that night a mentally disturbed internee from the Mainland died from shock as a result of Mr. Oshima’s death. The camp grew even more melancholy.”

-Muin Ozaki, Fort Sill internee

The military calls the new internment camp a “temporary emergency influx shelter,” a dystopian echo of the US Army War Relocation Authority’s decision to label Japanese internment camps “relocation centers.”

Unlike the internees during the Second World War, the new internees will be isolated from their parents and denied basic visitation rights. They will also not be provided with education or recreation during their detention. While Japanese internees famously organized their own baseball leagues to lessen the isolation and boredom of their illegal detention, the Trump administration has refused to allow immigrant children outdoors to play soccer at today’s internment camps.

The decision underscores that no democratic rights, no matter how basic, can be defended by the Democratic Party. In 1993, then-President Bill Clinton issued a statement offering “a sincere apology to you for the actions that unfairly denied Japanese Americans and their families fundamental liberties during World War II... In retrospect, we understand that the nation’s actions were rooted deeply in racial prejudice, wartime hysteria, and a lack of political leadership.”

Twenty-five years later, these statements have been exposed as meaningless. The Democratic Party has responded to the Pentagon announcement with silence. The Democrats are driven by their own pro-war hysteria, directed chiefly at Russia. The locking-up of immigrant children under a presidential declaration of “national emergency” by Trump is the logical product of the permanent national security state established in the bipartisan “war on terror.”

It was Democratic President Barack Obama who temporarily detained immigrant children at Fort Sill in 2014. Obama deported more immigrants than all previous presidents combined. At press time, Democratic “socialist” Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez had not spoken or tweeted about the internment of immigrant children at Fort Sill.

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Fort Sill Internment Camp

To the faces of my children sleeping, I will not say goodbye nor will I forget... Taken prisoner by the dark and furious. On this night of endless rain.

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