

Trump deploys more federal agents in Portland crackdown

By Jacob Crosse
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Emails provided to the *Washington Post* confirm that the Trump administration has already begun deploying an additional 100 deputy US Marshals to Portland, Oregon, beginning last Thursday. The *Post* has also learned that the Department of Homeland Security has plans drawn up to send an additional 50 Customs and Border Patrol (CPB) agents to the city.

The *Post* revelation follows an earlier report by Oregon Public Broadcasting that “several dozen” federal agents are also being deployed, beginning on Sunday. Both actions are a further confirmation that the Trump government cannot rule through popular support and is increasingly relying on militarized troops answerable only to the executive branch.

Protests against police brutality and in support of George Floyd, murdered by Minneapolis police on May 25, have continued for 60 straight days within the city, primarily centered around a three-block radius that includes the Mark O. Hatfield United States Courthouse. The arrival of federal paramilitaries in early July has only further stiffened the resolve of protesters, who correctly interpret the deployment of armed paramilitaries as a direct assault on their democratic rights.

In the last two weeks, demonstrators have been teargassed, shot with rubber bullets and pepper balls, and bludgeoned with batons, while at least seven people have been kidnapped by militarized camouflaged DHS agents driving unmarked vehicles. Those kidnapped have been held for hours in unknown locations without cause or due process, in violation of the Bill of Rights.

Scenes of DHS agents brutalizing protesters, livestreamed on the internet, have also led to a resurgence of protests across the country, with dozens of protests held throughout the weekend in major US

cities and throughout Oregon.

In Portland, at least 114 Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and Border Patrol Tactical Unit (BORTAC) paramilitaries have already been unconstitutionally deployed under the guise of quelling ongoing protests against police violence. The new forces announced are meant to supplement and also rotate out agents who have been deployed since the start of the protests.

The new agents being deployed are drawn from the Marshals Service and are part of the Special Operations Group (SOG). SOG operatives undergo “extensive, specialized training in tactics and weaponry.” SOG missions include “seizing assets” and “apprehending fugitives.”

Sunday night’s protest was declared an “unlawful assembly” shortly after midnight. Within minutes, federal agents emerged from the courthouse and began firing rubber bullets and launching tear gas into the crowd. Shortly after 1:00 a.m., federal paramilitaries formed a line in the street in front of the courthouse and moved down the street beating and attacking protesters. It is unknown how many were detained or arrested by the time agents retreated back into the courthouse after 2:00 a.m.

On Tuesday, National Guard commander Adam DeMarco will be testifying before the House Committee for Natural Resources, which is investigating the government’s use of force against protesters during Trump’s June 1 Rose Garden “law and order” speech.

After being given explicit orders from the highest levels of government, local and military police, along with federal agents, fired tear gas and rubber bullets into a crowd of roughly 1,000 protesters who were not in violation of curfew.

DeMarco is currently serving in the D.C. National Guard and was also a party to the events that day. He has already released an opening statement writing that what he witnessed on June 1 was “deeply disturbing to me and to fellow National Guardsmen. Having served in a combat zone, and understanding how to assess threat environments, at no time did I feel threatened by the protesters or assess them to be violent.” DeMarco concluded his statement: “From my observation those demonstrators—our fellow American citizens—were engaged in the peaceful expression of their First Amendment rights. Yet they were subjected to an unprovoked escalation and excessive use of force.”

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