

Trump incites fascistic violence as US election approaches

16 September 2020

As the US presidential election enters its final seven weeks, the Trump administration is intensifying its incitement of violent and extraconstitutional actions.

On Sunday, Michael Caputo, Trump's assistant secretary of public affairs at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), posted a video on Facebook in which he urged Trump supporters to arm themselves and accused government scientists of "sedition" for criticizing the administration's response to the coronavirus pandemic.

"If you carry guns, buy ammunition, ladies and gentlemen, because it's going to be hard to get," Caputo declared. He went on to state that if Biden refused to concede in November, Trump supporters should prepare for armed violence. "And when Donald Trump refuses to stand down at the inauguration, the shooting will begin," he said. "The drills that you've seen are nothing."

Democrats have downplayed Caputo's threats, dismissing them as the rants of a mentally unstable individual. On Tuesday, Caputo announced that he was considering taking a leave from the HHS.

Caputo's video, however, is in line with other comments by leading Trump supporters and the president himself. On September 10, Roger Stone, the veteran of Nixon's dirty tricks operations whom Trump pardoned this summer, told the fascistic Alex Jones that Trump should declare "martial law" if he loses the election, seize ballot boxes and arrest his political opponents. Stone declared that the *Daily Beast* should have its staff "taken into custody and their offices shut down" for publishing a story about protests against Trump if he tries to stay in power.

At his campaign rallies, Trump has glorified far-right vigilantes, called for extralegal "retribution" against protesters, charged that ballots are being "rigged," and openly stated that he will not accept the results of an

election that goes against him.

In an interview with Fox News over the weekend, Trump again threatened to invoke the Insurrection Act, as he did in June, to deploy the military against domestic opposition. Asked how he would respond to protests following election night, he said, "We'll put them down very quickly if they do that," adding, "We have the right to do that, we have the power to do that if we want."

This is the language of civil war.

Trump does not have a mass fascist movement at his command. However, he is seeking to use the election in order to develop such a movement, whatever happens on November 3.

Within the ruling class, in the US and internationally, there is a growing recognition that the political institutions of the United States are breaking down. The *Economist* writes that "November could herald not a smooth exercise of democracy but violent discord and a constitutional crisis."

The *Financial Times* wrote over the weekend of a "nightmare in Washington" if Trump loses the election but refuses to concede. "With the stage set for a dramatic showdown in the event of a close-run result, a constitutional crisis could play out against the backdrop of violent unrest in the streets—something that has flared in several US cities in recent months." Behind the scenes, the FT noted, top military officials are discussing possible scenarios, including the direct intervention of the military itself—either on Trump's side or against him.

Writing in the *Washington Post* on Tuesday, Greg Sargent drew attention to the calculated effort of Trump to paint any scenario in which he is not declared the winner to be inherently illegitimate. "This comes," Sargent notes, "even as Trump has also suggested to his supporters in every which way that they should

prepare to resist such an outcome as well... it might not matter to the actual outcome what he tells them to think. But it certainly makes political violence or other deep civic damage more likely.”

Trump gives unvarnished expression to concerns of the financial oligarchy that historic levels of social inequality, compounded by the response of the ruling class to the pandemic, is generating mass social discontent with potentially revolutionary implications.

The Democratic Party is the second wing of the capitalist two-party system, whose main purpose is to paralyze popular opposition to Trump. The Democrats seek to mobilize broader sections of the upper middle class on the basis of identity politics—the obsessive fixation on race and gender. They advance no program that addresses the real interests of the vast majority of the population.

While Trump is carrying out the election as an episode in a civil war, the Democrats are always on the defensive, balancing any mild criticism of the right with a more ferocious denunciation of the left.

The principal social base of the Democratic Party is sections of Wall Street and the military who see in a future Biden administration a more effective representative of the ruling class in both foreign and domestic policy. This week, billionaire Michael Bloomberg pledged to spend \$100 million to support Biden’s campaign in Florida, part of a flood of money from wealthy donors into the Democratic Party.

To the extent that the Democrats have a “message,” it is that the removal of Trump will return everything to “normal,” that Trump is an aberration in an otherwise healthy society. But how did this aberration take place?

The breakdown of the political institutions of bourgeois democracy is a product of more fundamental, and interrelated, causes: decades of social counterrevolution that have created staggering levels of social inequality; forty years of unending war, which is now being transformed into great-power conflict; the massive growth of the military-intelligence-police apparatus, directed at both imperial conquest abroad and domestic repression at home; the criminalization of the ruling class, from the utilization of torture to domestic spying and corporate-financial manipulations.

Trump’s rise to power in 2016 already gave expression to these underlying processes. The pandemic, however, has served as an enormous

accelerant.

The great danger is that all opposition to Trump will be constrained by what is acceptable to the Democratic Party, which means what is acceptable to the financial aristocracy and the military. There are many historical lessons on how fascism came to power—in Germany, Italy, Spain, Chile and other countries. All of them center on the catastrophic consequences of politically disarming workers by channeling social anger behind one or another faction of the ruling class.

American and world capitalism has reached a breaking point. The working class is being radicalized. The bourgeoisie is moving ever more directly to unconstitutional, anti-constitutional and overtly fascist forms of rule. This will persist regardless of who is in the White House after November 3.

The issues raised in this election cannot be resolved on the basis of an electoral strategy. They can only be resolved through the independent and revolutionary movement of the working class to take state power and reorganize all of social and economic life.

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