



Struggle-La-Lucha.org

Vets, activists call on soldiers to reject orders to overturn election

written by Greg Butterfield
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Black Lives Matter. U.S. National Guard troops called out in Los Angeles, May 31, 2020.

Last June 1, [as reported by Struggle-La Lucha](https://www.struggle-la-lucha.org/2020/11/26/vets-activists-call-on-soldiers-to-reject-illegal-orders-to-overturn-election/), President Donald Trump attempted to carry out a coup d'état when his administration ordered U.S. soldiers and National Guard troops to “dominate” Washington, D.C., during mass protests against the police murder of George Floyd.

Trump’s plan was to invoke the Insurrection Act of 1807 — first enacted to suppress slave rebellions — and dispatch the military to put down Black Lives Matter protests across the U.S.

The scheme collapsed when Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark Milley and Defense Secretary Mark Esper lost their nerve, fearing that rank-and-file soldiers, mostly from the working class and many from Black and Brown communities, would refuse to carry out these orders and join the protesters.

Instead, Trump deployed an illegal secret federal police force, including agents of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Homeland Security and the Border Patrol, [to Portland, Ore.](#), Seattle and other cities for a smaller-scale attack on protesters. In September, Trump's stormtroopers carried out the [cold-blooded execution](#) of anti-fascist Michael Reinhoehl near Portland, Ore.

But Trump and his closest supporters have never given up their desire to use the military to secure their hold on power and crush workers and oppressed communities. Rumblings of possible troop deployments began before the Nov. 3 election. And since Trump has refused to acknowledge his defeat, and continues to try and overturn the vote, the rumblings have grown louder.

Just a week after Election Day, Trump abruptly [replaced several high-ranking officials](#) in the Defense Department, the civilian body that oversees the Pentagon, and the National Security Council with ultraright loyalists. Esper, who had balked at the June 1 coup attempt, was replaced as secretary of defense by Chris Miller, previously the director of the National Counterterrorism Center, who had only served in that post since August.

Others moved into high posts include both civilians and former military personnel known for public displays of racism and anti-Muslim bigotry, and advocates of war with Iran.

Support for resistance

Since the beginning of the Black Lives uprising this summer, the organization About

Face: Veterans Against War (formerly known as Iraq Veterans Against the War) has urged National Guard soldiers to resist deployment to suppress the protests. A letter signed by 700 veterans called on these troops to [“Stand Down for Black Lives.”](#)

The group [reiterated its appeal](#) in the runup to Election Day: “This election is critical and as vets we know troops are often put in questionable positions and told they have no choice. You have options and we’re here to help.” About Face publicized ways for National Guard members to report “ethical, legal or safety concerns” and request support.

[The National Lawyers Guild Military Law Task Force](#) also announced it would provide support. “MLTF ... shares the concerns of many in the public and the legal community, that U.S. servicemembers may be given illegal orders or face real conflicts with their moral, political or religious beliefs in the context of the 2020 Presidential election and its aftermath. In particular, we are concerned that National Guard members and other military personnel may be used in voter suppression or repression of progressive demonstrations.

“The Task Force is troubled about the lack of effective legal alternatives for servicemembers dealing with possible illegal orders and believes it is essential that members of the military are fully informed about their rights under the law. ... For this reason, the Task Force has set up a system for free, confidential telephone consultations with attorneys to discuss possible illegal orders and related issues.”

And a popular appeal to U.S. soldiers was issued by Detroit’s Moratorium Now! Coalition, [“Attention! Refuse to Follow Trump’s Illegal Orders to Overturn the Election.”](#) The call is endorsed by the Peoples Power Assembly, the Peoples Alliance-Bay Area, Women in Struggle/Mujeres en Lucha, the Wisconsin Bail Out the People Movement and Youth Against War and Racism, among others.

‘You do have a choice’

The call states: “At some point, Trump may declare the 2020 election to be ‘null and void.’ He would then order you, U.S. servicemembers, into cities and towns across the country, to suppress the millions of people who pour into the streets to protest his illegal coup d’état. Are you ready to shoot down civilians, just to keep Trump illegally in power despite the election outcome?

“Union locals and labor councils across the country are already preparing for a national general strike if Trump refuses to recognize the people’s decision and overturns the election. Are you ready to bayonet workers standing up for our democratic rights?

“Some 42 percent of U.S. soldiers are people of color. Are you willing to kill for this racist bigot as he tries to hold his grip of power and unleashes bloody revenge on any who oppose him?”

The call goes on to point out the hypocrisy of Trump and his allies when they attempt to use the troops to circumvent the capitalists’ own highest law, the U.S. Constitution, with which the boss class tries to justify its role as global arbiter of “democracy”:

“You do have a choice. We know that you have been told over and over again that you must follow orders. Trump may be for now the commander-in-chief, but you swore an oath to defend the Constitution, not Donald Trump. Article 92 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice dictates that you must follow only lawful orders.

“You know that if Trump seizes power by using the military against the people, that would break the law. And ‘just following orders’ would be no excuse.

“If that day comes and Trump orders you to attack the people, stand down! Tell your commanders that you will not enable Trump to overturn the will of the people. Join with the people in the streets and help uphold all our democratic rights!”

