

The siege of Washington, D.C.: Trump's police state goes live

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Rally against Trump in D.C., August 11.

Aug. 8 — In an escalation of his authoritarian ambitions, President Donald Trump has ordered a massive mobilization of federal police and military personnel to patrol the streets of Washington, D.C. The move marks another step toward the consolidation of a police-state regime, with Trump openly threatening a federal takeover of the capital city and the deployment of the National Guard to suppress dissent.

Washington, D.C., is a federal territory (the District of Columbia) and is not part of any state. Under the Home Rule Act of 1973, it has an elected mayor and city council, but Congress retains ultimate authority and can (and regularly does) override local laws and budgets. Residents can vote for president, as granted by the 23rd Amendment, and are represented in the U.S. House of Representatives by a non-voting delegate. They have no representation in the U.S. Senate. Since 2000, standard D.C. license plates have carried the phrase “Taxation Without Representation.”

A show of force

Federal officers from at least 15 agencies — including the Secret Service, Homeland Security, ICE, the FBI, and the U.S. Marshals — have been deployed across Washington, supplementing the city’s 3,400 Metropolitan Police officers. At least 120 federal agents were on the streets Friday night, Aug. 8, with White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt warning that the operation could expand “as needed.”

But Trump is not stopping there. In a series of statements, he has threatened to take over the local government and flood the city with National Guard troops. On his far-right social media platform, Truth Social, he declared:

“If D.C. doesn’t get its act together, and quickly, we will have no choice but to take

Federal control of the City, and run this City how it should be run, and put criminals on notice that they're not going to get away with it anymore."

At a press briefing Wednesday, Trump doubled down, stating, "We have to run D.C." — adding that this might include "bringing in the National Guard — maybe very quickly, too." When asked about repealing D.C.'s limited home rule, established in 1973, he casually remarked, "The lawyers are already studying it."

A long-planned power grab

This is not the first time Trump has sought to impose martial law in the capital. During the 2020 George Floyd protests, he pushed for military deployment, only to be blocked by Pentagon officials who feared the resistance of the troops, who were sympathetic with the Black Lives Matter protests, saying that the military should not be engaged in domestic law enforcement.

The pretext for this latest crackdown? A single attempted carjacking in Dupont Circle involving a former staffer of the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), the budget-slashing task force set up by Elon Musk. Two 15-year-olds have been arrested, but Trump is using the incident to demand harsher penalties for juvenile offenders — part of a broader law-and-order narrative that ignores FBI data showing a decline in violent crime in D.C. over the past five years.

White House Deputy Chief of Staff Stephen Miller, Trump's most openly fascistic adviser, took the fearmongering to grotesque extremes, claiming that Washington is "more violent than Baghdad, more violent than parts of Ethiopia, and parts of many of the most dangerous places in the world." The implication was clear: The capital, like a warzone, must be pacified by force.

Militarizing the U.S.: A broader agenda

Trump's actions in D.C. fit a disturbing pattern of normalizing military repression.

Earlier this year, he deployed Marines to the U.S.-Mexico border. On Aug. 8, the New York Times reported that Trump has secretly signed an order directing the military to take action against so-called drug cartels and other criminal groups in Latin America and the Caribbean, immediately targeting the sovereign countries of Mexico, Venezuela and Haiti.

In June, 4,000 National Guard troops and a brigade of 700 Marines were deployed into Los Angeles following widespread protests of ICE Gestapo-style raids. And on his birthday, June 14, Trump staged a militarized spectacle in Washington, complete with tanks and warplanes — a not-so-subtle display of his authoritarian vision.

Meanwhile, ICE has launched sweeping raids in cities across the country including New York City, Chicago, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Denver, Miami, Atlanta, Seattle, Washington, D.C., Newark, Boston, San Jose, and multiple cities in Texas such as Houston, Austin, Dallas, Fort Worth, San Antonio, and Laredo. Many seem designed to provoke clashes and justify further crackdowns. The goal? To condition the public to accept armed troops in the streets as a fact of life.

The January 6 hypocrisy

Trump's "law and order" rhetoric is steeped in hypocrisy. The most violent episode in recent D.C. history was the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection — incited by Trump himself. Five people died, and over 130 Capitol Police officers were injured in the assault. Yet since returning to office, Trump has pardoned the rioters while purging the Justice Department of officials who investigated the coup attempt.

The media's silence on this history is deafening. Instead of holding Trump accountable, the political establishment treats his authoritarian threats as mere rhetoric — even as he lays the groundwork for dictatorship.

A government at war with the people

Trump's actions reveal a regime in crisis, lashing out at a population that overwhelmingly rejects its policies. His approval ratings have cratered below 40%. ICE raids have met protests in nearly every city and even in the countryside. The June 14 "No Kings" protests saw over 10 million take to the streets in the largest one-day demonstration in U.S. history. The message has been sent, but it'll take action to deliver it effectively.

Trump is moving fast — and if the people do not act faster, the streets of Washington may soon resemble those of an occupied city.

