

The enemy within: Trump's class war

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Generals and admirals at Quantico session with Trump. Hegseth has begun an “anti-woke” purge of the officer corps.

President Donald Trump’s appearance before hundreds of generals and admirals at Quantico was not a routine address. It was a declaration of war — not on foreign rivals, but on the people in the U.S.

At a time of austerity budgets and cuts everywhere, the two-hour special assembly of all admirals and generals in command positions worldwide cost approximately \$6 million, according to the Center for Strategic and International Studies. It could have been done on Zoom for a few thousand dollars.

Flanked by his so-called Secretary of War, Pete Hegseth, Trump laid out plans to transform the U.S. military into a domestic instrument of repression, targeting immigrants, Black and Brown communities, unions, women, LGBTQ+ people and anyone who dares resist his agenda.

“We’re going to straighten them out one by one,” Trump told the brass. “That’s a war too. It’s a war from within.” He announced the creation of a “quick reaction force” to put down civil disturbances, casting protest as an “enemy from within.”

He went further: U.S. cities, he suggested, should be used as “training grounds” for the armed forces. The meaning was clear — the normalization of military occupation on U.S. soil.

This was not theater. Trump has already sent National Guard units and Marines to Los Angeles, ordered federal forces into Portland, overseen the occupation of Washington, D.C., and named Chicago, Baltimore, San Francisco, and New York as future targets.

The plan is clear: concentrate military power against the working-class, multinational centers of resistance that anchor U.S. cities.

Building a political guard

Hegseth railed against “woke garbage,” vowed to purge dissenting officers, and pushed directives that would gut protections against racism and sexual abuse, including rape. Even seemingly trivial rules — like beard bans — carry a racist edge, aimed at forcing out Black and Muslim soldiers, sailors and marines.

Hegseth has begun an “anti-woke” purge of the officer corps. He has fired dozens of senior officers, including the previous chairman of the Joint Chiefs, other top generals, combat commanders, and other commanders.

The goal in eliminating Black, Latine, women, lesbian, gay and trans officers is to ensure a political guard in the mold of the Waffen-SS.

Trump’s demand was explicit: any officer unwilling to join this war on the “enemy within” should resign.

This was no isolated provocation. It is the spearhead of a coordinated, multi-front offensive to consolidate personal rule and unleash a historic assault on the U.S. working class.

This authoritarian offensive reaches far beyond the barracks. Trump has moved to neutralize every potential source of opposition — indicting critics, hounding media outlets, and leaning on corporations and social media platforms to silence dissent. TikTok, newly brought under oligarchic control, is being reshaped as a tool for suppressing digital protest.

Harshest on the most oppressed

As always, the harshest blows fall on the most oppressed. ICE operates as a Gestapo-like force, detaining tens of thousands without charge and deporting two million, according to Homeland Security, within months — spreading terror in immigrant

neighborhoods and leaving families too frightened to leave their homes.

Meanwhile, the assault on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is a calculated attempt to roll back the gains of the civil rights movement. Corporations are eagerly complying, weaponizing discrimination to strip workplace rights from Black, Asian, Latine, Indigenous, women, lesbian, gay and trans workers.

Trump's vow to use major cities (all with Black mayors) as "training grounds" makes the racist logic clear. Deployments to Los Angeles, Portland, Memphis, and the occupied capital (Washington) are not about "crime waves." They are military operations designed to crush popular protest and silence resistance.

Purges and austerity

The authoritarian offensive extends deep into the government itself. The administration has purged an estimated 300,000 federal workers, clearing the way to turn the machinery of government into Trump's personal party apparatus.

But authoritarianism here has a class purpose. "Make America Great Again" is not a carnival slogan or nostalgic appeal. It is a program to restructure U.S. capitalism by restoring profitability and global supremacy. And the chosen method is as old as capitalism itself: the ruthless intensification of exploitation.

Wages must be driven down, unions crushed, with the police and military force unleashed to discipline labor.

Trump's bombast is camouflage; his tantrums are tactics. The real goal is to expand the U.S. government's role in repressing working-class resistance and securing the conditions for renewed profits.

Class war budget

Trump's budget exposes the blueprint: massive tax giveaways to the wealthy, financed through deep cuts to Medicaid, food assistance, and every program working people depend on to survive.

In Marxist terms, this is not mere fiscal policy — it is the government acting as the executive committee of the capitalist class, orchestrating a direct transfer of value from labor to capital. Workers lose the meager social wage they fought to win; capital reaps the reward in the form of subsidies and tax relief.

And this is only the opening salvo. What is being prepared is not one round of cuts but a rolling offensive — a sustained assault on living standards and democratic rights until resistance is broken.

Dictatorship of the bourgeoisie

This is not McCarthyism in the midst of a booming postwar economy, when red-baiting was used to pacify a labor movement still on the rise. What we face today is far more dangerous: repression unfolding in the middle of a crisis economy defined by what capitalist economists call a “K-shaped recovery.”

The metaphor is telling. The upward line represents the soaring fortunes of the asset-owning capitalist class, fattened by imperialist super-profits and speculative bubbles. The downward line marks the opposite reality: a working class pushed into stagnation and decline, with its wages flat and its social wage gutted by austerity.

The conclave at Quantico, the ICE raids, the mass purges, and the austerity budget are not disconnected episodes. They are interlocking parts of a single program: the construction of a dictatorship to wage open war on the working class.

At the U.N. on Sept. 25, just days before the assembly of generals and admirals, Trump laid the groundwork for a U.S. invasion of Venezuela. In the last month, U.S. forces sank three boats off Venezuela's coast.

Speaking from the podium at the U.N., Trump warned, “We will blow you out of existence / obliterate you.”

Trump is not merely eroding norms. He is actively constructing an apparatus of power designed to crush organized opposition. His invocation of “the enemy within” is not rhetoric. It is a declaration of class war.

Quantico was a show of force and a statement of intent. The White House is remapping the instruments of state toward political domination. The question now is whether the working class meets this offensive with fragmented outrage — or with collective power strong enough to turn back the billionaire oligarchs who would trample democratic rights to secure their domination.

