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By Eric London
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Trump calls for US troops to wage “war” on drug cartels in Mexico

Donald Trump threatened to deploy US soldiers to Mexico yesterday in the aftermath of a gang-related attack that left nine dual US-Mexico citizens dead in the northern state of Chihuahua. Six children from a Mormon family were among those ambushed and killed on Monday in an apparent case of mistaken identity.

“This is the time for Mexico, with the help of the United States, to wage WAR on the drug cartels and wipe them off the face of the earth. We merely await a call from your great new president!” Trump tweeted, referring to Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO).

Trump’s threats are not hollow. There are roughly 5,000 soldiers on the US-Mexico border, and Trump constantly invokes the specter of gang violence to justify his fascistic attacks on immigrants. “The cartels have become so large and powerful that you sometimes need an army to defeat an army,” he added.

Trump’s comments will provoke anger among a Mexican population that is deeply hostile to US imperialism and Trump’s racist attacks. Trump has called Mexicans “rapists” and “criminals” and has intensified attacks on immigrant workers in the US. From 1846 to 1848, the US invaded Mexico on a false pretense and robbed it of half of its territory.



Chihuahua state police officers man a checkpoint in Janos, Chihuahua state, northern Mexico, Tuesday, Nov. 5, 2019. Drug cartel gunmen ambushed three SUVs along a dirt road, slaughtering six children and three women, all U.S. citizens living in northern Mexico, in a grisly attack that left one vehicle a burned-out, bullet-riddled hulk, authorities said Tuesday. (AP Photo/Christian Chavez)

AMLO addressed Trump's threats in a press conference yesterday, groveling before the US president: "I will speak with President Trump to thank him for his support," he said, adding that his government would see "whether in the spirit of cooperation there is a possibility that we can count on the help [of the US] in case it is needed." AMLO said he would not request the deployment of US troops on Mexican soil.

A relative of the slain women and children tweeted that if Trump wanted to "help," he should work to decrease drug consumption in the US and stop "the ATF [US Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives] and Gun Law loopholes from systematically injecting high powered assault weapons to Mexico."

Trump's threats are aimed not only at promoting militarism on the US southern border, but also at enflaming an emerging crisis at the highest levels of the Mexican state. Last week, influential retired General Carlos Gaytán Ochoa gave a speech to an audience of military leaders—including the secretary of national defense—proclaiming that the military was "offended as soldiers" by AMLO's presidency.

The widely reported speech was a trial balloon for a military coup.

"We are worried about the Mexico of today," Gaytán said. While criticizing AMLO for the humiliating failure of security forces to arrest Ovidio Guzman, son of incarcerated cartel kingpin Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman, in a raid in Culiacan, Sonora, last month,

Gaytán made clear the real concern of the military is that AMLO is not taking necessary measures to prepare repression against an upsurge of social opposition in the working class.

“Currently we are living in a politically polarized society because the dominant ideology, coming from the supposed left, has for years accumulated great resentment,” he said.

Gaytán’s comments come in the midst of a series of social explosions across Latin America, including in Chile and Ecuador, where millions have taken to the streets in opposition to austerity and social inequality.

The motivation behind Gaytán and his backers was expressed in an October 23 column in the *Washington Post* titled “Chile’s violence has a worrisome message for the world.” It warned, “If it can happen in Santiago, it could happen anywhere. That is the uncomfortable message that the rest of the world should take from the sudden breakdown of civil order in Chile, and unfortunately it is correct.”

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The controversy over General Gaytán’s speech has produced broad discussion in the corporate media about the likelihood and advisability of a coup. On November 3, *El Universal* published an editorial board statement titled “Mexico: A coup d’état is impossible,” which would not have been written were that statement true. Opinion articles praising the military in glowing terms have appeared in the conservative press.

On Saturday, AMLO tweeted that Mexico “would not permit another coup d’état,” referencing the 1913 US-backed coup against Francisco Madero, which brought the right-wing general Victoriano Huerta to power during the Mexican Revolution. Madero was subsequently murdered with US support.

Tacitly referencing Gaytán’s speech, AMLO tweeted: “Here there is not the least opportunity for the Huertas, the Francos, the Hitlers or the Pinochets. Today is not fertile soil for genocide nor the scoundrels that advocate it.”

He went on to suggest that that the comparison with 1913 was limited because, unlike Madero, who lacked a “social base that protect and support him,” his government “enjoys the support of a free, conscious and just majority that loves legality and peace and will not allow another coup.”

Though his words acknowledge the real threat of a coup, AMLO’s effort to downplay the seriousness of the threat underscores the extreme danger confronting the Mexican working class.

In a press conference this week, AMLO said Gaytán was protected by “freedom of expression” and referred to the military as “the people in uniform.” This is the exact phrase used by murdered Chilean President Salvador Allende in the weeks before the military coup of September 11, 1973. Allende and the “Popular Unity” government sought to downplay the danger of a military coup in order to calm social opposition and demobilize mass struggles by the Chilean working class.

There remain divisions within the Mexican and US ruling class over whether AMLO’s government represents an obstacle to the interests of the US and Mexican ruling oligarchies or a necessary instrument for dissipating social opposition.

In its October 23 column, the *Washington Post* mused that the social explosion in Chile broke out in part because “Chile lacks a populist movement, or a canny populist caudillo politician. Such a figure might have been able to use public anger for their own purposes, but would also have had a better chance to control it. For example, Mexico’s left-wing populist president Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador frequently led public protests, but successfully persuaded his followers not to resort to violence.

“In Chile, where conventional politics lacks a party or a personality to channel their grievances, protesters have resorted to self-destructive vandalism. Which is to say, while charismatic Latin American populists understandably tend to make western leaders nervous, Chile shows that they can perform a vital function.”

To confront the danger of imperialist intervention and military dictatorship, the Mexican working class must learn the lessons of the 20th century.

The Chilean disaster of 1973 shows that the working class must activate its immense social power by mobilizing itself independently of all the factions of the Mexican ruling class—including AMLO, the trade unions and the Movement for National Regeneration (Morena)—and fight for socialism. From Germany and the US to Chile and Mexico, the ruling class of the world is again turning toward dictatorship to prepare for the growing upsurge of social opposition to capitalism.

Relying on AMLO and the Mexican ruling class to protect the working class from invasion and military dictatorship would result in disaster. Instead, the Mexican working class has powerful allies across the Americas, including in the United States. The fight against dictatorship and US imperialism requires the mobilization of a hemispheric movement of the working class for the establishment of the United Socialist States of the Americas.