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www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

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By Barry Grey
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Trump campaign enlists army of poll-watchers to intimidate Democratic voters

With Election Day in the US (November 3) less than two months away, the Trump campaign is stepping up its efforts to ensure that the president remains in power by any and all means. This includes mobilizing right-wing forces to intimidate and terrorize likely Democratic voters.

The Trump Team is seeking to enlist what the campaign website calls an “army” of poll-watchers to flood polling stations around the country in a transparent effort to drive away those likely to vote for the Democratic candidate, Joe Biden. Young people, workers, immigrants and minorities in Democratic strongholds will be targeted for harassment and perhaps worse by right-wing elements recruited on the basis of an appeal to militarism, racism and anti-communism.

Those who access the website at “armyfortrump.com” are encouraged to click on a page titled “Election Day Team.” There they see the headings “Join The Army For Trump” and “Join President Trump’s Army Of Supporters.”

An embedded video on “Election Day Operations” (EDO) claims that the purpose of the polling place patrols is to “ensure a fair and honest election.” It declares, “Our election day operations are designed to make sure that everyone who is legally entitled to vote has the opportunity to vote once.”



Trump tweets the link to his campaign to enlist an army of poll-watchers (@realdonaldtrump)

Given that Trump has repeatedly claimed that he lost the popular vote in 2016 by nearly three million ballots only because immigrants and others voted illegally, the phrase “legally entitled to vote” is heavily loaded to target immigrant and poor would-be voters.

The video continues: “We all know that the Democrats will be up to their old dirty tricks on Election Day to make sure that President Trump doesn’t win. We cannot let that happen. That is why our goal is to cover every polling place in the country with people like you.”

Below the video is a button to “ENLIST” and sign up for “training in your area.”

The heavy emphasis on military themes makes clear that the Trump campaign hopes to mobilize among its “poll watchers” the militia and vigilante types who have been attacking those protesting against police violence and racism across the country.

The Republican convention presented the election as a twilight struggle between the “American Way of Life” and “mob rule” by socialist terrorists and anarchists, declared to be the real power behind Joe Biden and the Democrats. Since then, Trump has delivered one fascistic rant after another, in which he has incited violence against protesters and defended killer cops and fascist vigilantes such as Kyle Rittenhouse, the seventeen-year-old would-be cop and Trump enthusiast who murdered two people protesting against police violence and racism in Kenosha, Wisconsin and seriously wounded a third.

Team Trump’s thuggish effort at voter suppression is part of a broader drive to destabilize the election process. Trump has raised the possibility of postponing the election, set by law for the first Tuesday in November.

He has repeatedly “joked” about remaining in power for eight or 12 more years, in violation of the two-term limit set by the US Constitution. He has denounced the expanded use of mail-in ballots in the midst of a pandemic, calling it a conspiracy to rig the election.

The strategy of the Trump campaign is to ensure that the election is held under conditions of violence and the threat of civil war, so as to facilitate a quick declaration of victory while millions of mail-in votes remain to be counted.

On Thursday, the *Washington Post* published an article headlined “The election will likely spark violence—and a constitutional crisis.” Written by Rosa Brooks, a Georgetown University law professor and cofounder of the Transition Integrity Project, it sums up the results of a series of war games modeling various Election Day scenarios.

The exercise had input from Democratic and Republican officials, civil servants, media experts, pollsters, tech and social media experts and former career officials from the intelligence community, the Justice Department, the military and the Department of Homeland Security. Their consensus was that “there won’t be a clear winner on election night because an accurate count may take weeks, given the large number of mail-in ballots expected in this unprecedented mid-pandemic election.”

Brooks writes: “With the exception of the ‘big Biden win’ scenario, each of our exercises reached the brink of catastrophe, with massive disinformation campaigns, violence in the streets and a constitutional impasse...

“In two scenarios (‘Trump win’ and ‘extended uncertainty’) there was still no agreement by Inauguration Day [January 20], and no consensus on which candidate should be assumed to have the ability to issue binding commands to the military or receive the nuclear codes.”

In one scenario, by late night on Election Day most major networks have called the election for Biden, “but Trump refuses to concede, alleging massive voter fraud and a stolen election.” In Michigan and Wisconsin, where Biden has won the official vote and Democratic governors have certified the slates of Biden electors, Republican-controlled legislatures send competing pro-Trump slates to Congress for the January 6 Electoral College vote.

Massive demonstrations break out demanding that Trump concede. Trump incites right-wing violence against the protests, resulting in protester deaths. Biden repeatedly calls for “calm,” “unity” and a “fair vote count,” while Team Trump encourages violence and intimidation against ballot-counting officials and Biden electors. Trump orders federalized

National Guard or active-duty troops into cities to “restore order.” The crisis continues for weeks.

The breakdown of constitutional and electoral norms is not the product of one individual, the would-be Mussolini, Donald Trump. American democracy is collapsing under the weight of an unprecedented social, political and economic crisis, intensified by the coronavirus pandemic. But, as the *World Socialist Web Site* has repeatedly explained, the virus is not the cause of the crisis, but rather a trigger event that has exacerbated the previously existing, accumulated contradictions of American and world capitalism.

At the heart of the social contradictions is the malignant level of social inequality, which has undercut traditional forms of bourgeois democratic rule. The response of the ruling class to the pandemic, both in the US and internationally, has been to systematically subordinate public health and workers’ lives to the protection and expansion of the wealth of the financial oligarchy. While 40 million Americans filed for unemployment as of early August, the total net worth of US billionaires increased by \$637 billion.

The ruling class and both of its parties are moving rapidly toward dictatorship in the face of the crisis and the growth of opposition in the working class. Both parties operate from a position of weakness, as the broad masses of working people and youth are radicalized, increasingly attracted to socialism and inexorably moving into mass struggle against the capitalist status quo.

The response of Trump and the Republicans is to turn to extra-constitutional means, incite fascistic forces, and seek to build support within the military and the police for a presidential dictatorship.

The Democrats’ response is more nuanced, but also reactionary. They seek to undermine the growth of social opposition, expressed most openly to date in the ongoing protests against police violence, by channeling it into the divisive and impotent framework of racial and identity politics. By declaring all social problems to be expressions of the conflict between “white America” and “black America,” thereby obscuring the fundamental class divisions in capitalist society, they seek to divide the working class and head off a conscious revolutionary movement against capitalism, which they defend.

At the same time, they make their primary appeal to disaffected layers of the Republican Party, the military and the intelligence agencies, as seen in the Democratic convention, which paraded former Republican office-holders and generals guilty of war crimes, such as former Secretary of State Colin Powell, before the public. Biden’s response to the

Republican convention has been to launch a massive ad campaign denouncing violent protesters and touting his own law-and-order credentials.

Whichever right-wing candidate wins the election, the crisis will intensify, as will the attacks on the social and democratic rights of the working class and the drive toward war.

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