

Trump threatens to send US troops to Mexico in conversation with Peña Nieto

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According to a short excerpt of a telephone conversation between US President Donald Trump and his Mexican counterpart Enrique Peña Nieto, leaked by an anonymous White House official, the US head of state threatened to send US troops south of the border because of the Mexican military's supposed reluctance in prosecuting a bloody "war on drugs."

"You have a bunch of bad hombres down there," Trump told Peña Nieto, according to the excerpt given to AP. "You aren't doing enough to stop them. I think your military is scared. Our military isn't, so I just might send them down to take care of it."

The Associated Press claims the leaker provided only that snippet of the conversation to the news agency on condition of anonymity because the administration did not make the details of the call public. Mexico's Secretariat of Foreign Affairs denies the veracity of what was leaked of Trump's bellicose and inflammatory remarks.

Eduardo Sánchez, spokesman for the Mexican president, asserted that Trump's threat, "did not happen during the call." According to this account, Peña Nieto had first posed the matter of cross-border arms trafficking. Sánchez claimed he was not in a position to confirm the content of Trump's response.

However, a White House official, speaking on condition of anonymity, subsequently told the media that Trump had made the remark, but claimed that it was "lighthearted."

News of the exchange last Friday comes alongside a similarly tense conversation between Trump and Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull over a refugee-swap deal brokered during the Obama administration.

Given both the Australian and Mexican governments' efforts to downplay the tenor of the discussions, there is the likelihood that the leaks were calculated to send a message to ruling classes around the world as to the "new

political order," to use Stephen Bannon's ominous phrase, represented by the "America First" orientation of the Trump administration.

The exchange between Trump and Peña exposed the historical character of the relationship between the two countries—that is, one of imperialist exploitation of Mexico by Washington. Trump's crude bullying, his addressing of a head of state as though a colonial administrator to a coolie, would simply be the slipping away of the mask of diplomatic civility hitherto concealing the ugly face of US imperialism.

In looking at the social devastation wrought by Mexico's War on Drugs, including over 166,000 dead and some 28,000 disappeared in the past decade alone, and from there to draw the conclusion that the Mexican military is operating with an excess of timidity, only points to the barbarous and fascistic outlook prevalent at the summits of power.

Of course, this outlook is not unique to the Trump administration. The Democrats have no serious differences with the Trump administration's current approach to the long and predatory relationship of the American ruling class towards Mexico. After all, Vermont senator and "democratic socialist" Bernie Sanders voted to confirm former Marine General and commander of US Southern Command John F. Kelly as secretary of Homeland Security.

That Kelly, who has voiced his opposition to sanctuary cities and his support of the recent immigration ban, is held by Democrats and their coterie of pundits to be a "moderating influence," exposes as a fraud their feigned commitment to immigrants and refugees currently facing the threat of deportation.

Far from an isolationist strategy, Trump's "America First" policy would mean further stacking the terms of US-Mexico trade in Washington's favor. Taken to its most extreme conclusion, it also signals to the Mexican ruling

elite the willingness of the present administration to employ military force in pursuit of US profit interests.

In response to the growing economic and political threats from the north, the Mexican bourgeoisie is attempting to lessen its dependence on US-Mexico trade, whose balance is decidedly in US imperialism's favor, contrary to Trump's bald-faced lie that the US is "being taken advantage of." While 80 percent of Mexican exports head to the US, by comparison, only 15 percent of US exports go to Mexico.

Mexico has recently moved to fast-track a "modernized" trade agreements with the EU, with the next rounds of negotiations scheduled for April and June in Brussels and Mexico, respectively.

The Peña Nieto government has also sought to strengthen economic ties along the Pacific and in the Americas. Secretary of Foreign Affairs Luis Videgaray has highlighted in particular the revisiting of trade relations with the countries of the Northern Triangle (Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador) and South America, alongside China, South Korea and Japan.

In particular, Mexico and China have announced a \$212 million deal, brokered by multibillionaire Carlos Slim, to begin assembling cars for the Chinese state-owned automaker JAC Motors in the state of Hidalgo, with hopes of catering to domestic and Latin American markets.

Despite the open threats, Peña Nieto and the Mexican ruling establishment will undoubtedly continue efforts to curry favor with the Trump administration.

From the role of the CIA in assisting previous PRI governments in carrying out a "dirty war" against leftists and guerrillas, to the current funding of the Mexican repressive apparatus through agreements such as the Merida Initiative in order to brutalize and deport Central American immigrants, the Mexican ruling elite has a long and bloody history of close collaboration with Washington.



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