

Police sweep at Ford Michigan Assembly west of Detroit as UAW colludes in security crackdown

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On Friday, January 31, local police brought dogs into the Michigan Avenue Assembly Plant (MAP) in Wayne, Michigan west of Detroit to search both production shifts, allegedly in an effort to ferret out drugs, alcohol and weapons. The police sweep generated widespread anger among workers, who saw it as a gross violation of privacy and an act of intimidation.

While local news media did not report the police sweep at Michigan Assembly, workers who witnessed the operation reported on social media that Ford terminated three workers on the spot. There were no reports that illegal drugs or weapons had been found on site.

The police intrusion at Michigan Assembly followed within days the posting of announcements by local UAW officials at several Ford plants of intensified company security measures at plants in North America. This included notice of plans to station plainclothes security in every plant. According to a letter posted by Todd Dunn, Plant Chairman at UAW local 862, the largest UAW local at Ford that includes the giant Kentucky Truck Plant (KTP) in Louisville, Kentucky:

“Ford Motor Company has established a Global Security Task Force that will operate in every US plant. The goal of this initiative is to ensure the safety of both employees and the company.

“The primary issues they are focusing on include:

- Drug use and possession in the plant and the parking lot
- Weapons in the plant
- Alcohol use in the plant and the parking lot
- Illegal parking in the parking lot
- Theft within the plant and on company property

“It’s important to know that random bag checks may be implemented in the future. The company is required to provide a 30-day notice prior to starting such measures.

“Additionally, three plain clothes members of the Global Security team will monitor the site across all three shifts.

“Please ensure that you are following company policy regarding drugs, alcohol, theft and parking.”

Scott Elliott, UAW plant chairman at MAP, made a similar post on the same day.

It would not even occur to the company stooges in the UAW bureaucracy that such undemocratic measures should be opposed. They agree with management that once workers pass through the factory gates their Constitutional rights go out the window. The security crackdown at Ford takes place as Trump’s Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents carry out workplace raids across the country.

The purpose of this is to divide workers and create a climate of fear and intimidation to prevent any collective resistance by workers against increased exploitation and job cuts. Far from opposing this, the UAW bureaucracy is giving its support to Trump’s lies that trade tariffs and his anti-immigrant attacks are for the benefit of workers.

Both Michigan Assembly and KTP were shut down for a time as part of the phony “Stand Up” strike called by UAW President Shawn Fain during the 2023 contract struggle. The UAW eventually rammed through a sellout deal that met none of workers key demands. In the wake of the contract there have been mass layoffs at Ford, General Motors and Stellantis.

Workers at KTP in particular are known for their militancy. In 2023 KTP workers defeated the UAW-Ford deal brought back by Fain. They had previously defeated UAW-backed national agreements in 2019, 2015 and 2011. Will Lehman, a socialist autoworker who ran for UAW president in 2022 against Fain, won a significant support among workers at the plant.

Many questions remain unanswered. There is no reference to the establishment of a Global Security Task Force anywhere on the Ford website or in any press releases by the company or the UAW International. Ford media relations was not able to confirm the existence of such an initiative.

In November UAW Local 551 Shop Chairman Alan

Millender at Chicago Ford Assembly posted a notice expressing concerns over “increasing car break-ins, thefts, accidents, and other incidents,” at the plant. He said he had met with management and insisted they address the issue.

He added, “In response to my complaints about the memberships safety, Ford has not only responded to increased security measures to Chicago Assembly but many other plants in the Ford System.”

It is not known if this initiative is related to the reported establishment of a Ford Global Security Task Force and plans for posting of undercover security in factories.

While illegal drugs, alcohol and weapons have no business in workplaces, many workers expressed the sentiment that these issues, manifestations of the social crisis created by capitalism, were merely the pretext for what amounts to blatant intimidation. Further, workers felt the UAW was colluding in this violation of their rights.

It is hard to believe that the stationing of undercover security in every plant, with the agreement of the UAW, is anything but an effort to intimidate workers. Chicago Assembly, Kentucky Truck and Michigan Assembly are plants where the World Socialist Web Site *Autoworker Newsletter* is well known and has wide readership. The security crackdown takes place under conditions of mounting attacks on the social rights of the working class, including the mass deportation of immigrant workers.

Reports of the raid traveled fast by word of mouth and social media. From the afternoon shift at its flagship Dearborn Truck Plant producing the top-selling F-150 pickups, a worker reported seeing a suspicious van outside the plant building on Thursday night. “As far as plant safety and security is concerned,” he said, “they should focus on getting out the higher-ups and team leads that are harassing women before they worry about the marijuana.” The post on Instagram had 458 likes at the time of this writing.

A worker at Dearborn Truck told the *World Socialist Web Site*, “Somebody shared that union announcement on Facebook just last Tuesday. And then, BAM! Here it is. A search is already taking place. It’s hard to put all the pieces together because I was hearing things coming from different plants, warnings that something was going to happen.

“They can’t just do that without a warrant and probable cause. That’s a violation of our rights. They can’t just do random searches. And the union was helping them do it.”

The Dearborn Truck worker summed up the thoughts of his co-workers when he commented, “[UAW President Fain] supporting Trump’s trade war is the biggest problem we have. What exactly are they going to do to make sure that wage increases work in tandem with inflation. Stacked up against inflation, wages always lose.”

He continued, “I was just thinking of ways that we could

actually bring about the solidarity between all workers whether they are factory workers or desk workers.”

The stationing by Ford of security in factories recalls the most violent and ugly episodes from the company’s history. This included violent assaults on workers carried out at the behest of company founder and Nazi sympathizer Henry Ford and his henchman Harry Bennett, head of the Internal Security Agency at the Ford River Rouge plant from the 1920s until 1945. Bennet led company goons against plant workers during the Battle of the Overpass in 1937. In 1932 Bennet led opposition to the Ford Hunger March of unemployed workers. Five workers were killed by Ford security and local police.

The evident collusion of the UAW in the security crackdown by Ford underscores the role of the union apparatus as enforcers for management. Both the UAW and management fear a rebellious rank and file under conditions of mounting attacks on jobs, living standards and democratic rights.

The increasingly intolerable conditions that workers face—job insecurity, stagnating wages, overwork and unsafe conditions—require the development of an independent movement by the rank and file against both management and the UAW apparatus which acts as company enforcers inside the factories. This means expanding the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC).

The defense of democratic rights within the factory is a necessary condition for a successful fight against job cuts and unsafe working conditions. This must be combined with opposition to the targeting of immigrant workers, which is being used as a spearhead for the destruction of the democratic rights of the entire working class through the elimination of basic protections such as birthright citizenship.



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