

Autoworkers speak out as UAW-Ford say police in auto plants will be the new normal

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Anger erupted at a local United Auto Workers union meeting Sunday as workers from the Ford Michigan Assembly Plant (MAP) in the western Detroit suburb of Wayne, raised questions about the January 31 search at the plant with police dogs as well as a sharp reduction in hours.

The police action at MAP, it is now clear, inaugurates a broader move by management at the Detroit automakers, with the support of the UAW, to heighten surveillance and security at plants nationwide in an evident move to intimidate shop-floor opposition. It coincides with the workplace raids by Trump's Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents.

The security crackdown came as management at MAP has declared an end to all overtime and has begun sending entire shifts home after four hours. The cuts began in the immediate wake of the Trump administration's announced plans for massive tariffs against Canada, Mexico and China. While the tariffs on Canada and Mexico were temporarily paused by Trump, on Monday the White house announced tariffs on all steel and aluminum imports.

Many workers at MAP had recently transferred to the plant from the Ford Rouge complex in Dearborn, Michigan after layoffs were carried out there last year following the 2023 auto contract.

At the MAP union meeting UAW officials defended the police searches and said there would be more searches, and further, that plainclothes officers would be stationed in the plant. They cynically claimed this was to make sure people were happy and safe on the job due to concerns over drugs and other illegal activities.

Local UAW officials at both MAP and the Kentucky Truck Plant in Louisville posted notices announcing the new Ford security crackdown last month shortly after Trump's inauguration. Workers at both plants had been called out during the UAW's performative "Stand Up Strike" in 2023.

Since the February 4 report on the security crackdown by the *World Socialist Web Site*, which has attracted a wide readership, both management and the union have issued defensive statements downplaying the significance of what can only be described as the attempt to create a police state atmosphere in the auto plants.

When the WSWS initially reached out to a Ford media representative on the Monday after the police action at MAP, they claimed to have no knowledge about the security operation.

However, two days later, after the WSWS report of the police intrusion was posted, a Ford press spokesperson reached out to the WSWS in an apparent effort in damage control. Jessica Enoch, Ford Director of Communications, said the company had issued the following statement regarding the police action at MAP, "We are taking proactive steps to create a positive workplace experience for our employees by enhancing safety and security in our manufacturing facilities."

It continued:

"Michigan Assembly Plant hosted members of the Wayne Police Department for an orientation tour of the facility. The goal was to build first responders' readiness to assist in case of an emergency, for the benefit of our employees."

The next day a report appeared in the *Detroit Free Press* which was a further coverup. Reporter Jamie L. LaReau presented the unannounced search with police

dogs as a routine effort on the part of Ford focused on safety. She claimed, “They were not looking to make a bust, but rather to make it safer in the long run.” Adding, “It was the first time the officers did this, but it won’t be the last.”

A City of Wayne police official told the *Free Press*, “We’ve been in discussions with Ford for a long time in planning this, and there will be several more.”

La Reau continued, “Ford, the police, and the UAW are working together to make Michigan Assembly—and all Ford’s US plants—as safe as possible.”

As previously reported by the WSWS, in a letter posted on social media prior to the police action, UAW Local 900 Shop Chairman Scott Elliott at MAP said he supported the crackdown. Elliott told the *Free Press* the UAW was working closely with law enforcement, and added, “I am not going to tell somebody that I don’t want my plant safe. If you bring a gun in here, you’re getting fired, period. If you bring pot in here, you’re fired, period. You are putting the company at risk, period. These are the company rules, period.”

Elliott tried to present the surprise searches as business as usual, telling the *Free Press* that the initiative began in December when Ford hired three retired police officers at the plant. “They’re not undercover. You know who they are,” Elliott said. “They are not sneaking around. They are pretty transparent.”

LaReau went on to cite sources at General Motors and Stellantis who indicated those companies are discussing similar security crackdowns at their facilities.

No one could explain how having law enforcement on premises, reminiscent of police state regimes, would make workers any safer. It is increasingly clear that the ICE raids and round up of immigrants by Trump have encouraged corporate management to trample over the rights of all workers.

A WSWS reporting team that went to MAP a week after the police raid found that many workers had been taken by surprise and saw the introduction of police into the plant as an attempt to intimidate them and preempt any organized resistance to the ongoing attacks on their jobs and living standards.

Some workers said that they had heard a rumor, but many workers in the parking lot had no knowledge of the searches.

“They don’t have the right to search you,” one worker said. “They can’t just pull you over on the street and conduct a search, so how can they do it in the plant? They have no right.”

Many workers were still angry over the police sweep. One woman waiting for the second shift agreed that the raid appeared connected to the attacks on democratic rights being carried out by the Trump administration. “Absolutely, this is bound up with Trump’s attacks on immigrants and their forced deportations,” she said. “The timing is obvious.”

A worker from the Ford Dearborn Truck Plant, referring to the police sweep at MAP, said, “Undercover cops and illegal searches in all of our factories are part of the plan for supporting and defending this bankrupt system.

“The UAW, our union that is supposed to be there to counsel and defend workers, is doing just the opposite. They are harassing the women in the plant to make them do sexual favors behind closed doors. Who is to say these new global cops will not do the same thing?

“The UAW has been screwing the people over every contract signing. It has been an absolute mess.”

Drawing the connection to the rampage against the US Constitution by the Trump administration, he said, “This is what Trump is doing: all these illegal searches and seizures. He even did this with our data to allow Elon Musk and that unofficial group he’s got [Department of Government Efficiency] to take it all.

“He basically handed over the data for everybody in America to do whatever they like with it. I know they were just stopped recently by a federal judge because it’s an illegal search and seizure.”

The attempt to create a police state atmosphere in the auto plants must be opposed by every worker. This requires that workers develop independent organizations, rank-and-file committees uniting across different industries, to coordinate the defense of jobs and working conditions with the fight to defend fundamental democratic rights.



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