



The
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Network

Domestic Deployment of the Military to American Cities

TCN Communications Guide

Context

In recent months, the federal government has increasingly used the military to intervene in American cities without genuine emergencies or requests from local leaders. These deployments undermine civilian authority, politicize the military, and erode public trust. They place service members in untenable positions, disrupt families and employers, and target communities that have not asked for or consented to a military presence.

Core Message

Deploying military forces to American cities absent a real emergency is a misuse of power. It undermines civilian control, weakens democracy, and places both communities and service members in harm's way. The Guard is meant to serve neighbors in times of disaster, not to patrol streets for political theater.

Veteran Framing: Why This Matters to Us

Veterans know the importance of lawful authority, clear missions, and the line between military and civilian life. We've seen in other countries what happens when that line disappears. Using the armed forces for political purposes erodes trust in the military, strains families, and damages one of the last remaining institutions Americans broadly trust. We understand that protecting the Constitution means saying no when troops are misused.

What This Means for Communities

When military deployments are forced on communities without local consent, accountability shifts from leaders elected by the people to the federal government. This strips residents of control, undermines local strategies, and destabilizes neighborhoods. Communities don't want soldiers in their streets, and Guardsmen themselves didn't sign up to be used as props in political battles. These deployments threaten the long-term public safety of communities by weakening trust between civilians and service members.



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Recommended Messaging

Community Voices Opposed

- Local leaders and residents do not want troops patrolling their neighborhoods.
- Deployments often occur without requests from local leaders who know their community best. This proves this is about politics, not public safety.
- If it can happen in one city without cause, it can happen anywhere.

Veterans Speaking Up

- The National Guard's mission is to help in real emergencies—floods, fires, storms—not to be misused for politics.
- Unnecessary call-ups disrupt families, civilian jobs, and readiness.
- Each misuse erodes the credibility of the military and damages the oath of service.

Rule of Law & Civil-Military Norms

- Military force is meant to be the last resort, not the first response.
- Deployments without local request or clear emergency undermine civilian authority and violate the principle of federalism.
- Normalizing domestic deployments sets a precedent for future misuse anywhere in America.
- Courts have ruled against Trump's use of the National Guard in Los Angeles, finding the deployment violated the Posse Comitatus Act by putting troops into prohibited law enforcement roles

Targeting Communities of Color & Stripping Local Authority

- Deployments have targeted majority-Black, Latino, and immigrant communities.
- Stripping authority from elected leaders undermines democracy and worsens inequities.
- Substituting troops for community-based solutions erodes trust and increases division.

Calls to Action

- **Veterans:** [Record a video](#) to share with your community.
- **Partners:** Amplify veteran voices as trusted messengers and link civil-military norms to community defense.
- **Electeds:** Demand transparency. Push back with legal and political tools
- **General Public:** Stay informed and demand accountability from elected leaders at every level of government. Especially put pressure on state leaders: Governors, state representatives, state senators, etc....



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Understanding the Difference: National Guard vs. Active Duty

The U.S. military can take different forms when it shows up in American life. Knowing the difference matters for how we talk about deployments:

National Guard

- **State Active Duty (SAD):** National Guard troops are under the governor's command and paid by the state. They can respond to floods, fires, or local emergencies.
- **Title 32:** National Guard troops are still under the governor's command, but Washington pays the bill. They can support federally requested missions (like disaster relief) but remain accountable to their state leadership.
- **Title 10:** National Guard troops are "federalized" and answer directly to the President and Pentagon. They become legally indistinguishable from active-duty troops, and restrictions like the Posse Comitatus Act apply — meaning they're not supposed to do policing unless special laws (like the Insurrection Act) are invoked.

Active Duty Military

- Full-time federal troops under Pentagon command. They are not supposed to carry out law enforcement inside the U.S. Using them in domestic roles risks breaking long-standing legal and democratic safeguards.

Why It Matters

The National Guard is designed to serve neighbors and communities, with governors as the link between citizens and troops. Active duty is a federal force without that local connection. Both forces have been used to fight wars abroad, but the National Guard's primary mission is the local state and community. Blurring those lines—by federalizing the National Guard or dropping active-duty soldiers into cities—turns a community-based force into a political weapon and undermines the very principles of civilian control.

Additional Resources

- Democracy Communications Collaborative Messaging Guidance:
 - [Guidance - National Guard Deployments - 09.09.25](#)
- The Chamberlain Network's Domestic Deployment Campaign Playbook:
 - [TCN Domestic Deployment Playbook](#)