

Trending: UC Berkeley death | Quake shacks | New S.F. font | Huge grocery store | Police chi

OPINION

# Trump just threatened Democrats with ‘death.’ Is the SEAL Team 6 assassination theory now in play?

By **Brett Wagner, J. Holmes Armstead**, Contributors  
Nov 20, 2025

Gift Article





President Donald Trump speaks to reporters on Tuesday in the Oval Office. In a social media post on Thursday, Trump said that Democrats who called on the military to disobey “illegal” orders should be

executed for sedition  
Brendan Smialowski/AFP/Getty Images



Listen Now:

**Trump just threatened Democrats with ‘death.’ Is the SEAL Team 6 assassination theory now in play?**

About 6 Minutes

1x

 Everlit

President Donald Trump has finally tipped his hand.

Not only is he apparently aware that some of the orders he’s giving the military may be unlawful, and not only does he appear to plan to continue issuing potentially unlawful orders, believing the military must obey them, regardless, he has now threatened a group of Democratic senators and House members, each a decorated military veteran, with arrest and execution for merely suggesting, in a joint video, that service members honor their oaths by refusing to obey an unlawful order.

Here is one example of the free speech the president deemed punishable by death [in a social media post](#) on Thursday:

ADVERTISEMENT  
Article continues below this ad

---

“This administration is pitting our uniformed military ... against American citizens. Like us, you all swore an oath to protect and defend this constitution ... Right now, the threats to our Constitution aren’t just coming from abroad, but from right here at home. Our laws are clear. You can refuse illegal orders ... you must refuse illegal orders.”

It’s easy to write off Trump’s most extreme social media utterances as unhinged steam blowing. But we must take the threat seriously when he announces that he may sidestep the judicial system altogether, appointing himself judge, jury and executioner, by fast-tracking the assassination of his political rivals for the crime of “SEDITIONOUS BEHAVIOR punishable by DEATH.” We’ve already seen our president publicly target real-life political adversaries like James Comey with his Justice Department.



**Want more SF Chronicle?**

Make us a Preferred Source on Google to see more of us when you search.

**Add Preferred Source**

The White House immediately walked back Trump’s comments. But his impulsive nature, combined with the newly minted presidential power created out of thin air by last year’s 6-3 Supreme Court ruling — guaranteeing immunity for

any “[official acts](#)” conducted while in office — is a yet-to-be-tested recipe for disaster.

Trump has already tightened his grip on the military.

---

ADVERTISEMENT

Article continues below this ad

---

Los Angeles was singled out by our president to test the waters for federalizing a state’s National Guard. Specifically, whether you can do so, while simultaneously changing out your legal rationale — whenever it serves your purpose — as quickly as a chameleon changes colors.

First, Trump green-lighted an intentionally provocative Immigration and Customs Enforcement operation in our nation’s second-largest city to incite civil unrest — as a precursor to declaring a federal emergency. Unable to achieve that goal beyond a single square mile, he simply lied, saying the “emergency” was citywide.

Trump then invoked an obscure law ([Title 10, Section 12406 of the U.S. Code](#)) empowering him to nationalize thousands of California’s Guard troops for up to 60 days. The first unwitting pawns in his scheme to begin militarizing our nation’s streets.

Before that, Trump fired without cause the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, replacing him with some guy who's willing to wear a MAGA cap in public, in uniform no less.

Then the president fired all the top legal minds at the Army, Navy and Air Force tasked with determining whether his orders to the military are legal and within his presidential powers.

Remember, just a few weeks ago, Trump summoned the full complement of America's generals and admirals to Quantico Marine Base. There, every U.S. military officer with at least one star on his or her shoulder sat stoically as their commander-in-chief spoke of his political enemies as "the enemy within." With San Francisco topping his short list of "blue cities" he intended to use as "training grounds for our military."

Trump even warned our top military leaders: “If you don’t like what I’m saying, you can leave the room — of course, there goes your rank, there goes your future.”

That’s where we believe their commander-in-chief miscalculated. And continues to miscalculate.

At least, we hope so.

Because every one of those generals and admirals has served their country faithfully throughout their careers, honoring and upholding their sacred oath to “defend and protect the Constitution” and are prepared to lay down their lives, if necessary, to do so.

We’d wager a guess that most, if not all, of these real-life heroes have witnessed at least one of their fellow soldiers, sailors, airmen or Marines lay down their lives for their country.

We cannot believe, in our heart of hearts, that simply because a Supreme Court heavily weighted with Trump appointees and apologists has asserted, out of the blue and without precedent, that that same Constitution for which these brave service people have been willing to die for would allow themselves to be willing participants in upending the democratic

experiment that so many gave the ultimate sacrifice to preserve. Just months before our nation's 250th birthday, no less.

That, to us, seems like a bridge too far.

But a president's direct control over SEAL Team 6 is an entirely different matter altogether.

Unlike other leadership structures in our military, whereby a president's orders are delivered through the civilian chain of command — by the secretary of defense to military leaders, who then oversee their own chains of command — the Navy captains who lead SEAL Team 6 can answer directly, in their chain of command, to the president. That's why the idea of that unique fighting group as the one most likely to carry out domestic political assassinations was called out by the dissenting justices in the Supreme Court's presidential immunity ruling.

One can only imagine, 10 months into this second Trump term, how thoroughly these team members have been vetted to ensure they will obey, without hesitation, a “kill order” from their commander in chief.

One of these days, perhaps during a sleepless night when Trump usually entertains himself by posting or tweeting his usual outrageous rants in the wee hours, our president may mull an impulsive phone call instead.

---

## About Opinion

---

Guest opinions in **Open Forum and Insight** are produced by writers with expertise, personal experience or original insights on a subject of interest to our readers. **Their views do not necessarily reflect** the opinion of The Chronicle editorial board, which is committed to providing a diversity of ideas to our readership.

[Read more about our transparency and ethics policies](#)

---

One impetuous move from our mercurial president, and a line could be forever crossed.

Let’s hope those 800-plus generals and admirals, whom he just so thoroughly pissed off at Quantico, are already one step ahead of their commander-in-chief when it comes to that slippery slope.

*Brett Wagner, now retired, served as professor of national security decision making for the U.S. Naval War College and adjunct fellow at the Center for International and Strategic Studies. J. Holmes Armstead, now retired, served as professor of strategy and international law at the U.S. Naval War College and as a judge advocate general, inspector general and civil*



*affairs officer in the Army, Army Reserves and National Guard.*

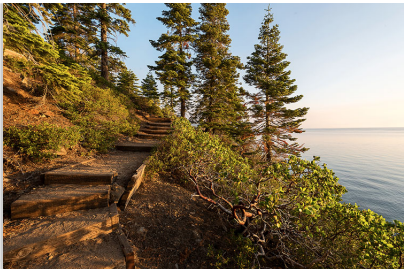
Nov 20, 2025

Brett Wagner

More From John Armstead

EAST BAY

John Beam, coach from 'Last Chance U,' shot in head at Laney College



OUTDOORS

One of Tahoe's favorite camping areas, closed for 2 years, to reopen

The highly sought-after camping destination on Lake Tahoe's West Shore was closed for two years for a large-scale infrastructure project.

SAN FRANCISCO

SF's newest supervisor resigns amid pet store controversies

GOSSIP

Why Wisconsin's infamy Mychael Dwyer with stealing from Xavier Becerra

Let's Play



Cross|word



Flipart



Really Bad Chess



SpellTov

Top

About

Contact

Services

Account

