

OPINION // OPEN FORUM

Trump said he plans to declare martial law. Here’s what that would look like

By **Brett Wagner**
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Gift Article









On the campaign trail, Donald Trump is making it clear that if elected president again, he will not hesitate to deploy the U.S. military on American soil.
Kyle Grillot/Special to the Chronicle 2023

By now we've all had a chance to hear the sound bites: Donald Trump boasting, to the bone-chilling applause of his MAGA base, his plan to declare martial law. As a former military professor, I feel it my duty to spell out for the American people what that would look like.

Two days in particular — a study in contrasts from Trump's final year in office — should provide the clearest understanding of what to expect should the GOP presidential front-runner's campaign slogan of "revenge and retribution" become our reality.

Because the difference between those two days, and the president's actions, could not be any starker.

Unlike Jan. 6, 2021, when Trump was reportedly holed up in the White House, watching the Capitol riots unfold in real time on television, while for hours resisting calls to send in the National Guard to restore calm — a day from the previous summer witnessed a much different commander-in-chief: one not shy, but eager, to deploy the military to disperse a crowd.

On the morning of June 1, 2020, someone in the presidential chain of command looked into obtaining the Active Denial System — a weapon deemed by international treaties and conventions to be so heinous, so over-the-top, it is banned from ever being deployed by any nation on another nation's

soil — in preparation for clearing a largely peaceful Black Lives Matter protest in Lafayette Square.

This Orwellian “crowd control” device Trump sought to unleash on the BLM protesters, and would likely seek to normalize in a second term — is shaped like a standard satellite dish, fits on the back of a jeep and shoots out “pulsed directed energy waves” similar to a microwave oven — all designed to make you feel, right down to your nerve endings, like you’re being set on fire.

On paper, the device may sound innocuous enough: a two-second burst of microwaves that can heat the top 1/64 inch of your skin almost instantly to a temperature exceeding 130 degrees. But as a now taken-down demonstration video of the weapon shows, it can turn a healthy young military recruit into a screaming, writhing human, doubled over in pain and begging for it to stop within seconds.

Another equally troubling weapon also requested that day is one with which I am less familiar: the Long Range Acoustic Device. Suffice it to say, it’s a sound cannon with an extremely high decibel range known to cause permanent hearing loss.

America owes an immeasurable debt of gratitude to the military commanders who stonewalled this last-minute, seemingly spontaneous attempt by the White House to get its

hands on these weapons. But don't count on that guardrail a second time. Not under a scenario where Trump pre-vets and installs a more amenable military chain of command ahead of time. Buckle up — because here's what that would look like:

The 47th president invokes the Insurrection Act and declares martial law, granting himself sweeping power to deploy U.S. armed forces on America's streets. Military leaders who dare speak out against him, such as former Joint Chiefs Chairman Mark Milley, are rounded up and summarily executed. Meanwhile, SEAL Team 6 is deployed to assassinate his political rivals.

Reporters who don't toe the line are rounded up, newspapers that don't print what they're told are shut down and broadcast media outlets that air any news not pre-approved by the White House are forced off the air. Detention camps for undocumented immigrants (and God knows who else) start going up everywhere, and armed personnel begin going door-to-door to round them up, along with anyone else unfortunate enough to wind up on Trump's "enemies list."

In response, citizens fill the streets, as Americans have done since our nation's founding, with large protests breaking out across the country. Picture the 2017 Women's March from Trump's first time around, only bigger. And that's where the "you-know-what" really hits the fan. With news outlets

favorable to the new administration broadcasting, for all to see, the fate that awaits anyone/everyone who fails to heed the warning:

Protestors are sent fleeing not by water cannons, but by sound cannons, covering their ears and screaming in pain, while others are targeted by the heat ray, fleeing just as quickly, as if on fire from a burning building; all compounded by the inevitable spectacle of those who slip or fall, disappearing off camera, presumably trampled in the stampedes. Sights, sounds and suffering of such startling proportion deliver a clear message to every single person — from your average citizen to local officials, from Capitol Hill to the Supreme Court — who might dare challenge this wanna-be dictator's authority: You could be next.

Let's be clear: None of this is hyperbole. Trump has made it clear he has no problem deploying any of these measures. Every idea expressed here originated with the former president himself. And so, he must be stopped. Because what I have described here is a point of no return.

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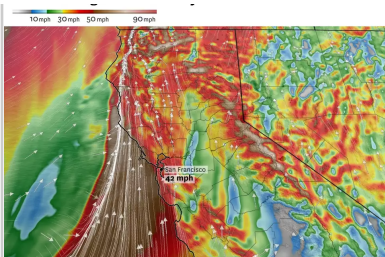
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