

US politics & policy

Donald Trump accuses Democrats of 'seditious behaviour' punishable by death over video

Threat comes after lawmakers tell members of US military that they must refuse illegal orders



Donald Trump on Truth Social: 'This is really bad, and Dangerous to our Country' © Reuters

Steff Chávez in Mexico City

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US President Donald Trump has accused a group of Democratic lawmakers who served in military or intelligence roles of “seditious behaviour” over a video they made telling service members that they must refuse illegal orders.

[Trump](#) suggested the lawmakers were traitors who should be jailed and even executed for the video.

“SEDITIONOUS BEHAVIOR, punishable by DEATH!” Trump wrote in a [post](#) on his Truth Social platform on Thursday. “This is really bad, and Dangerous to our Country. Their words cannot be allowed to stand. SEDITIONOUS BEHAVIOR FROM TRAITORS!!! LOCK THEM UP???”

Six members of Congress, led by Senator Elissa Slotkin, this week released a 90-second [video](#) warning that Americans' trust in their military is at risk, accusing the Trump administration of "pitting our uniformed military and intelligence community professionals against American citizens".

The [Democrats](#) told active-duty troops and those in the intelligence community that they "can" and "must refuse illegal orders". However, they did not specify what would constitute an illegal order or whether any had been issued.

In response to Trump's post, the six Democrats said in a joint statement on Thursday that "no threat, intimidation, or call for violence will deter us" from the "sacred" obligation to defend the constitution.

"What's most telling is that the President considers it punishable by death for us to restate the law," they added.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt on Thursday afternoon denied that the president wanted the lawmakers to be executed. The Democrats "were leaning into their credentials as former members of the national security apparatus, to signal to people serving under . . . Donald Trump that you can defy him and you can betray your oath of office," she said, adding: "That is a very, very dangerous message and it perhaps is punishable by law."

The Trump administration has deployed national guard troops in US cities and is conducting a military operation against alleged drug-trafficking boats in the Caribbean and Eastern Pacific that has killed at least 83 people since early September.

Republican and Democratic lawmakers, human rights experts and others have questioned the legality of the military actions but the White House has defended its policy.

Senators speak to members of the military and the intelligence community © SenatorSlotkin/X

The Democratic lawmakers' video has sparked a fierce backlash from members of the Trump administration.

Defence secretary Pete Hegseth called it “Stage 4 TDS”, or Trump Derangement Syndrome, in a post on X, while White House deputy chief of staff [Stephen Miller said](#): “Democrat lawmakers are now openly calling for insurrection.”

Slotkin, who was a CIA analyst and served in Iraq, was joined in the video by Senator Mark Kelly and US House members Chris Deluzio, Maggie Goodlander, Chrissy Houlahan and Jason Crow.

Last week Slotkin introduced the No Troops in Our Streets Act, a bill that would limit the administration’s ability to deploy the national guard in American cities.

Crow introduced a “War Powers Continuing Resolution” on Tuesday to bar the administration from continuing its drug boats strike campaign.

The lawmakers have defended their video. “You are not allowed to break the law in service to this country, even if somebody tells you that’s what you must do, and it puts service members in a very challenging position,” Kelly told MS NOW on Wednesday.

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