
Liberal icon Sean Penn wants a 'compassionate' army deployment to fight Covid-19

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Movie star Sean Penn has called on President Donald Trump to put boots on the ground to fight the Covid-19 pandemic in the US, compassionately of course. But anything resembling martial law could be a tough sell in America.

The coronavirus pandemic has infected over 280,000 people worldwide and killed just under 12,000. In the US, some 20,000 are infected and far more than 200 are dead. As governments in Europe use their militaries to enforce mandatory quarantine, Sean Penn now wants President Trump to do the same in the US. Also on rt.com 'I don't think so': Trump skeptical of national coronavirus lockdown

In an op-ed published by the Guardian on Saturday, Penn argued that National Guard deployments and wartime production orders are not enough to slow the spread of the deadly coronavirus. Instead, he wrote, Trump should task the military with "a full offensive against this virus."

The world famous actor and liberal called the US military "the most effective logistical and humanitarian organization the world has ever seen," and said that its troops should be sent out "to care instead of kill."

It's difficult to argue otherwise. The US military has a yearly budget of around \$750 billion, 1.3 million active duty personnel, a footprint in every corner of the world, and the ability to move men and material anywhere within a matter of hours. The Army, Navy, and Air Force combined employ more qualified physicians than the country of Ireland, according to statistics from the Irish Medical Council.

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Some of this muscle has already been brought to bear on the coronavirus pandemic. President Trump has ordered two hospital ships to moor in New York and Seattle, where they will ease the burden on civilian hospitals. National

Guard units have been deployed in at least 27 states, and the Army Corps of Engineers is planning on converting vacant buildings into intensive care wards in several key cities.

Leaders in some states have echoed Penn’s call for a full federal deployment. New York Mayor Bill de Blasio pleaded with the president to send military assistance to his city on Friday.

Not everyone in the US shares de Blasio and Penn’s enthusiasm for a federally-commanded deployment, however. In a nation founded on the ideal of personal liberty, citizens from all sides of the political spectrum have already sounded the alarm. Sharing videos of military transports and units moving into the streets, they have portrayed the initial National Guard deployment as a sign of things to come.

Amid the uncertainty, and with panicked Americans sharing alarmist texts from ‘friends of friends’ in law enforcement, governors and National Guard officials have insisted that convoys of military vehicles are loaded up with essential supplies, not ammunition.

When it comes to a federal military rollout, Trump’s hands are tied by the law. The 1878 Posse Comitatus Act prohibits the armed forces from engaging in domestic law enforcement duties, including surveillance and arrests. Nor can they lead the relief effort. Instead, the troops would take their orders from civilian organizations like the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) or the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Also on rt.com Never mind the HUMVEES! Maryland National Guard reassures residents there’s no martial law threat amid virus panic

The National Guard, if deployed by a state’s governor, is exempt from this law.

Since a 2006 amendment to the Insurrection Act, Posse Comitatus can be suspended if “domestic violence has occurred to such an extent that the constituted authorities of the State or possession are incapable of maintaining public order.” The Insurrection Act was famously used during the 1992 Los Angeles riots, when the 1st Marine Division was sent to LA to quell the unrest.
