

NFFE News



NFFE Receives Leaked Trump Memo Allowing Defense Department to Kill Unions for No Reason

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For the past century, unions workers have served as the backbone of the nation's defense through World War II and every war since. Many union Defense workers are veterans and many still serve in uniform in the U.S. Military and National Guard Reserves. However, none of this seems to matter to President Trump when he issued a confidential memo to the secretary of defense dated January 20, 2020 seeking to bar unions from the Department of Defense.



Trump gives the O.K. for the Defense Secretary to stop unions and collective bargaining without cause.

Ignoring a century of complementary relationships between union workers and the Defense Department, the leaked January memo refers to an obscure authority allowed under national security law that can supersede labor law when the president, or in this case, the now-delegated secretary of defense, feels labor rights interfere with the interest of the nation. Without citing any purpose, need, cause, or justification, Trump said this in the memo:

“When new missions emerge or existing ones evolve, the Department of Defense requires maximum flexibility to respond to threats to carry out its mission of protecting the American people. Where collective bargaining is incompatible with [DOD] organizations' missions, the Department of Defense should not be forced to sacrifice its national security mission and, instead, seek relief through third parties and administrative fora.”

NFFE and its federal labor partners are fighting back against this cowardly memo that extorts national security law in order to extract the lawful rights of federal workers in the workplace. A coalition of unions—the Federal Workers Alliance (of which NFFE serves as co-chair) has appealed to Congress to reverse this misuse of authority, and a legal strategy is under development.

“It is pathetic that without any cause or justification, President Trump declares yet another war on the rights of individuals to organize, this time in the Department of Defense,” stated NFFE National President Randy Erwin. “While this disturbing memo exists, we have fought and won other challenges to collective bargaining rights in the past and we will fight this misuse of authority in every way possible. **I want to remind our members that nothing has changed** other than giving the secretary of defense some authority to question collective bargaining. This is an abuse of authority because it carries no legal justification and thus, carries no legitimate weight in law.”

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