Six Lawmakers Tell U.S. Troop: Don’t Obey Illegal Orders

written by Dan La Botz | November 23, 2025

Robert Minor drew the cartoon “At last a perfect soldier!”. It was published in the July 1916 issue of The Masses, a radical, anti-war magazine from Greenwich Village.

In an extraordinary video that went viral, six Democratic Party lawmakers, speaking directly to U.S. military personnel, said soldiers can refuse to obey illegal orders. Two senators and four representatives, all veterans of the U.S. military or intelligence agencies, saying that “threats to our Constitution aren’t just coming from abroad, but from right here at home,” tell active-duty troops “you can refuse illegal orders” and “you must refuse illegal orders.”

While they did not say why they made this video at this time, it is clear that it was prompted by two recent developments. First, since June, President Donald Trump has been sending troops to American cities such as Los Angeles, Chicago, Washington, D.C., and Portland Oregon to repress protests, over the objection of mayors and governors who have sued in the courts, arguing that US law prohibits the military from acting as domestic law enforcement. And second, since September the U.S. military has destroyed 22 boats and killed at least 83 people supposedly for drug smuggling. In clear violation of U.S. and international law, these people were never tried, and no evidence was presented; these are clearly murders on the high seas.

President Donald Trump called for the arrest of the six legislators saying that they were guilty of “sedition, punishable by death.” He added “Each one of these traitors to our Country should be arrested and put on trial.” Many were outraged by his remarks, leading him to say he had been misunderstood and didn’t want them killed.

Many people, including some veterans, were angry at Trump’s remarks. In fact, the U.S. military tells troops during training that they have the right to refuse and must refuse illegal orders that violate the law or the Constitution.

The U.S. military has a long bloody history of egregious violation of human rights.

- During the Indian Wars of the late nineteenth century, the U.S. military carried out the Sand Creek Massacrein 1864 and the Wounded Knee Massacre in 1890, where hundreds of non-combatant men, women, and children were murdered.
- S. troops in the Philippines killed hundreds of civilians at Bud Dajo in 1906.
- During the Korean War, in 1950 in No Gun Ri, South Korea U.S. troops murdered over 150 men, women, and children.
- In 1968 during the Vietnam War, Lt. William Calley ordered troops to kill unarmed civilians in the village of My Lai who then murdered 300 unarmed civilians, women, children, and the elderly.
- **In 2005,** S. Marines killed 24 unarmed Iraqi civilians, including men, women, and children, in Haditha.

And we could list many other such atrocities.

International law forbids the military killing of civilians in war, yet we see it go on daily by Israel in Gaza and by Russia in Ukraine. If the U.S. should attack Venezuela, as seems possible given the massing of U.S. massing of ships, planes, and troops near that country, it is practically inevitable that civilians will be bombed or shot. Unless soldiers refuse to do so.

Critics of the Democrats who made the video argue that it is too hard for ordinary troops, for corporals or privates to know whether they are committing a war crime. And if they refuse to drop the bomb or to pull the trigger, that they could be subject to military discipline. But soldiers don’t have to understand international law or the uniform code of military justice to know that murdering unarmed men, women, and children is wrong. They have only to think about their own families and communities and look into their own hearts.

The six Democrats by making their video have challenged Trump and they have done a great service to our country, to those in the military, and to those at home or abroad who might be victims. This too forms part of the growing, complex resistance movement.