

Federal Agents & Troops at Voting Locations

THREAT LEVEL: 3 (MODERATE)

What is meant by: federal agents or troops at voting locations

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was created to enforce immigration laws, mainly targeting people with a criminal background and deporting those who pose a threat to public safety and security. This changed when the executive branch increased the number of agents by 120% while cutting their training period in half. As a consequence, there have been 29 shootings reported, resulting in 8 deaths, since 2025. Most of those killed, although immigrants, did not pose a public threat.

Separately, the Trump administration has deployed National Guard troops to several U.S. cities — Washington D.C., Los Angeles, Chicago, Portland, and others — for immigration enforcement and unrest response, in some cases over the objections of Democratic governors and mayors. This has raised a parallel concern: could that same kind of deployment be extended to polling places themselves during the midterms?

Why is this important

Both ICE and military/Guard forces are, in the view of critics, being positioned by the executive branch in ways that go beyond their stated missions — raising fear that either could be used to discourage voters from turning out, or to intimidate poll workers on the job.

Example: In Syracuse, NY, ICE agents confronted a poll worker, Paigelynn Gonyea, and delivered a warning in response to an Instagram post in which she had allegedly “doxxed” an ICE agent.

“During her shift, Gonyea received a phone call from a man identifying himself as Dave Brody, a Special Agent with the Department of Homeland Security. He said agents had visited her apartment and spoken with her husband about a post in which she had allegedly ‘doxxed’ an ICE agent back in January.” (AP and others)

Her husband gave the agents her phone number, and when called, Gonyea offered to meet them in a public place rather than at her home. The agents accused her of divulging the agent's name (doxing), which she in fact did not do.

Has ICE actually been assigned to polling locations?

Unconfirmed and disputed, not established fact:

- February: DHS official Heather Honey dismissed rumors that ICE would be deployed at polling locations, calling it misinformation. (ABC News and other outlets)
- July: DHS Secretary Markwayne Mullin said ICE would only be deployed “if a threat arose.” AG Todd Blanche did not directly answer the same question, saying only that ICE would “follow the law.” (Axios)
- The original source of the ICE-at-polls concern was Steve Bannon, who is not considered a reliable source of information. Subsequent statements by administration officials may simply have been off-the-cuff reactions to Bannon's remarks rather than confirmation of an actual plan.

Have troops or National Guard actually been proposed for polling locations?

Also unconfirmed, but the strongest denial of any item in this document comes from the military itself:

- January 2026: Trump told the New York Times he regretted not sending the National Guard to seize voting machines after the 2020 election — a comment that fueled these concerns but was not a stated plan for 2026.

- August 13, 2026: Georgia's Republican gubernatorial nominee, Rick Jackson, told a supporter he “expects” the National Guard to be part of Georgia's election day, per audio obtained by the Atlanta Journal-Constitution. Governor Brian Kemp's office responded that Georgia is “approaching this upcoming election the exact same way we have in the past” — i.e., no Guard at polling places, as in prior years.
- August 31, 2026: Gen. Dan Caine, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, wrote to Sen. Elissa Slotkin that “the Joint Force has no plans to send Federal military personnel or Federalized members of the National Guard to polling places during the 2026 elections” and no plans to use personnel to seize ballots or voting machines. He added he had “neither received nor anticipate receiving” any unlawful order on this. Defense Secretary Hegseth did not separately respond.
- Separately, a federal judge (Charles Breyer) already ruled that an earlier National Guard deployment to Los Angeles violated the Posse Comitatus Act, which bars the military from domestic law enforcement absent an actual emergency — a real legal check already in place, now headed to appeal.

How urgent is this?

THREAT LEVEL: 3 out of 5 (Moderate).

Reasoning: no confirmed incident of ICE or troops being stationed at an actual polling place exists today. The ICE claim traces to one unreliable source (Bannon); the troops claim has been explicitly and recently denied in writing by the Pentagon's top general. That puts this below the confirmed, already-occurred ballot seizures (Level 4) but above a non-issue, because of the administration's demonstrated willingness to deploy both ICE and troops aggressively elsewhere, and because at least one Republican candidate has publicly said he expects Guard presence on election day. This should be escalated immediately if any credible report of an actual polling-place deployment — of either kind — surfaces.

What can be done

Voters should be encouraged to vote early, and if voting at a polling location, to arrange for groups to vote together. This could mitigate fear of law-enforcement or military intimidation and also serve as visible evidence that citizens are casting ballots and that votes are being counted legally and fairly. Activists could also be present at polling places to observe the voting process and be there for support, should agents, troops, or others attempt to discourage citizens from voting.

Efforts could be made to further publicize media accounts like Paigelynn's story, both to raise awareness and to model how to respond if intimidation continues toward poll workers.

Sources

[Votebeat — ICE agents, polling places, and the 2026 midterms](#)

[Reuters — Trump has no formal plans to deploy ICE to polling sites, White House says](#)

War Room Podcast — February 3, 2026 (original Bannon remarks)

[Times Now News — Who is Paigelynn Gonyea? What we know about the DHS/ICE polling-place incident](#)

[Votebeat — Can Trump send National Guard troops to the polls in the 2026 election?](#)

[NBC News — U.S. military doesn't plan to deploy troops to the polls in November, general says](#)

[11Alive — Rumblings of National Guard presence at Georgia's 2026 election](#)