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PORTLAND

What would troops do in Portland? Would they have guns? Accompany ICE agents on raids?

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FILE - California National Guard soldiers were federalized by the Trump administration in Los Angeles in June 2025 under the same law the administration is using to federalize troops in Oregon. Experts say the actions troops in Portland engage in might echo those that troops engaged in in Los Angeles. (AP Photo/Eric Thayer, File) AP



By [Aimee Green](#) | [The Oregonian/OregonLive](#)

With the very real possibility that National Guard soldiers could deploy to Portland as early as this week, questions abound about what they'd do once they arrive.

Would they be assigned solely to protect the Immigration and Customs Enforcement building in South Portland?

Or would they venture out into other parts of Portland, escorting ICE agents as they hold presumed immigrants at gunpoint or seize them from homes, workplaces, businesses, next to schools and the streets?

Could they unleash tear gas on, shoot projectiles at or detain people in crowds outside the ICE facility that have protested President Donald Trump's crackdown on immigrants?

And would they carry guns?

The answer to at least some of those questions, while uncertain, could be yes.

The need for answers intensified Monday, with a three-judge panel of the U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals dealing Trump a major win. By a 2-1 vote, the panel overruled a lower court's order that temporarily barred the Trump administration from sending 200 federalized Oregon National Guard troops into the city.

Soldiers could arrive within another day to days, though two legal hurdles still stand in the way.

First, a lower court must also overrule a second temporary order barring National Guard troops from any state — including 200 to 300 from the California National Guard — from deploying into Portland. The judge on the case has indicated that she likely will lift her second temporary block — and soon.

And the wider 9th Circuit would need to shun an attempt to get a larger contingent of the court to overturn Monday's three-judge ruling. A 9th Circuit judge has set a deadline of midnight Wednesday for the city, state and federal government to file written arguments for why or why

not a broader range of judges should weigh in.

The Oregonian/OregonLive reached out to the U.S. Department of Defense, the Oregon Military Department, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Portland Mayor Keith Wilson and Gov. Tina Kotek for information about what troops on the ground might look like. They didn't answer specific questions, provided general statements or, in the case of local and state officials, said they'd been left in the dark.

But the news organization turned to other sources, including current and former National Guard members and their families, experts in national security and military law, what judges have said about Trump's ability to federalize troops and the real world experiences of two other American cities that have recently experienced National Guard deployments.

Here's what The Oregonian/OregonLive has been able to glean so far:

Troops likely would be armed with guns.

It certainly appears Guard members would carry both guns and ammunition. National Guard members will be carrying their "assigned weapon," according to U.S. Northern Command's website, though the website doesn't specify what that weapon is. Northern Command is part of the Department of Defense and has taken control of National Guard units from a few states.

Information can also be drawn from what happened in Los Angeles, when Trump used the same federal law he's using in Portland — Title 10 Section 12406 — to send more than 4,000 California National Guard troops into the city in June amid immigration protests and a small amount of violence. Federal officials said troops were carrying unloaded guns, though they also packed ammunition on their bodies in case they needed to load their guns in self-defense.

In Washington, D.C., where Trump in August declared a crime emergency in under a different law, National Guard soldiers initially arrived unarmed. But the following week Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth authorized them to carry rifles and handguns.

There are a "whole host of reasons" that sending the military into Portland, Chicago or any other American city is concerning, said David Janovsky, acting director of The Constitution Project at the nonpartisan Project On Government Oversight in Washington, D.C., which has historically focused on outing wasteful government spending. One big one is safety.

"The danger comes in introducing more armed people into volatile situations as it increases the odds that things can escalate," Janovsky said.

Troops must follow “Standing Rules for the Use of Force.”

Federalized troops must follow “Standing Rules for the Use of Force,” which lay out requirements under Title 10 of U.S. code.

Among these rules, troops must “avoid confrontation” with people “who pose no threat” to others or property. They also only allow a service member to “use force of any kind only as a last resort and, if used, the force should be the minimum necessary to accomplish the mission.” Warning shots are prohibited.

Additionally, the rules specifically state that deadly force isn’t authorized to disperse a crowd, stop looting or enforce a curfew.

What actions would National Guard troops carry out?

Clearly, some National Guard troops deployed to Portland would be assigned to protect the ICE facility. But it’s unclear if they’d relieve federal officers who’ve been working overtime or bolster their numbers or if they’d be used to set up buffer zones around the facility.

It’s also unclear whether National Guard members would accompany ICE agents into the Portland area to provide security as they detain people they believe are immigrants slated for deportation.

Under Title 10, the Posse Comitatus Act prohibits federalized troops from acting as de facto local law enforcement.

That’s unless Trump invokes the Insurrection Act, which would allow any branch of the military that Trump activates to perform a wide range of actions, including cracking down on crime across the city and making arrests. But Trump hasn’t gone there yet and so far has focused on Title 10.

What has the Trump administration said troops would do?

The administration has been vague in asserting what National Guard troops would do in Portland.

“All Title 10 forces will carry out those military protective activities that the Secretary of War determines are reasonably necessary to ensure the protection and safety of federal personnel and property,” reads a U.S. Northern Command news release from Oct. 3, a few days after Trump said “war ravaged” Portland needed the military to restore order.

In Los Angeles in early June, troops lined up shoulder to shoulder with riot shields to protect a federal building. In addition to more than 4,000 National Guard soldiers, about 700 U.S. Marines joined in. It often was difficult to distinguish between the two because of their similar uniforms, but troops including National Guard members accompanied ICE agents out into the community on roughly 75% of their enforcement missions under the explanation that they were providing security, [according to court findings](#).

Guard members also set up barriers that blocked both people and cars and apprehended at least one person, according to California's lawyers, who opposed the federalization of the National Guard.

In early September, a federal judge in California [ruled](#) that the Trump administration's use of National Guard members in Los Angeles frequently [crossed the line](#). The judge barred the federal government from using troops to conduct "arrests, apprehensions, searches, seizures, security patrols, traffic control, crowd control, riot control, evidence collection, interrogation, or acting as informants" for the time being.

What have others said the National Guard would do?

State Rep. Paul Evans, a Democrat from Monmouth, served in the U.S. Air Force from 1992 to 1997 and the Oregon National Guard from 1997 to 2013. He said he's been disturbed by the use of force by federal officers at the ICE facility in Portland, including deploying tear gas on crowds that don't appear violent and spraying chemical agents on protesters who don't appear to be a physical threat.

"For a National Guard officer, that is unthinkable," Evans said.

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He continued: "Proportionality is something that's beaten into every National Guard soldier: You respond in a proportional manner."

Evans, who has maintained his ties with people in the military, said he believes National Guard troops will carry the mindset that “I’m going to do a better job” than federal officers by “ensuring that federal ICE (officers) perhaps don’t go too far.”

Likewise, during a [Sept. 30 presentation](#), Oregon Brigadier General Alan R. Gronewold told a state Senate committee that Oregon National Guard troops would be trained in “protective crowd control.” Gronewold said that, although “the federal mission is beyond my control,” he planned to advise the commander in charge that one of the mission’s goals shall be “protecting any protesters at the ICE facility.”

Aimee Green

I've worked for The Oregonian since 2000, covering a wide range of beats, including cities, schools, breaking news, jails, prisons and the criminal and civil justice systems. I currently cover politics and... more

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