

'Not On Our Watch' – Veterans Promise 'Boots On the Ground' To Stop DAPL



By: [Claire Bernish](#) / [The Free Thought Project](#) A group of U.S. military veterans, standing in defense of Indigenous rights, has vowed construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline will never be completed – and will put boots on the ground to ensure it.

“We are committed to the people of Standing Rock, we are committed to nonviolence, and we will do everything within our power to ensure that the environment and human life are respected,” Anthony Diggs, spokesman for Veterans Stand, [told](#) CNBC. ***“That pipeline will not get completed. Not on our watch.”***

Veterans, said Diggs, seek to raise enough funds ***“to have a larger, solid boots-on-the-ground presence.”***

As staunch a stance as that might sound, the veterans remain [committed](#) to nonviolent action in defense of the Standing Rock Sioux against Energy Transfer Partners, the company responsible for pipeline construction.

On Wednesday evening, heavily militarized and armed police and National Guard forces [advanced](#) en masse across Highway 1806's Backwater Bridge for the first time in months to clear out a newer camp. At least 76 people were arrested, ostensibly for trespassing on private property – though the Morton County Sheriff's Department [told](#) the *Guardian* on Wednesday specifics of the charges had yet to be determined.

"A lot of water protectors really felt that we needed to make some sort of stand as far as treaty rights," Linda Black Elk of the Catawba Nation told the *Guardian*. *"We basically started to see police mobilizing from all directions. Someone came along and told us we had about 15 minutes before the camp would get raided."*

Law enforcement moved to clear the camp just one day after Secretary of the Army Robert Speer [told](#) the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to grant ETP the easement required to complete drilling under the Missouri River's Lake Oahe reservoir – the source of Standing Rock's drinking water and the subject of furious contention over Dakota Access.

Speer's command also follows the recent [signing](#) of executive orders by President Donald Trump for completion of both the Dakota Access and Keystone XL Pipelines – despite the latter being shot down by former President Obama.

Further indicative of a coming law enforcement crackdown on camps of water protectors, on Thursday, officials from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, tribal police, the ATF, the Standing Rock division of Fish and Wildlife, and USACE [showed up unannounced](#) and without a warrant on the property of LaDonna Tamakawastewin Allard to "assess" the Camp of the Sacred

Stones.

Livestreamer Johnny Dangers captured officials on video refusing to offer explanation beyond the vague 'assessment' for their presence on Allard's private property. Sacred Stone, as the camp is commonly known, is the original site erected for youth water protectors opposing pipeline construction; and – being located on private land – was believed immune from law enforcement efforts of eviction.

Worse, as Dangers and Allard said on social media, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe council appears to have asked officials to descend on the property – making the 'raid' a duplicitous act.

"We have been betrayed by Standing Rock Tribal Council,"

Allard posted to Facebook when officials arrived and refused to produce a warrant.



In December, tentative celebration erupted when USACE [halted](#) pipeline construction in order to perform an exhaustive environmental impact study before granting the aforementioned easement. But Energy Transfer Partners – cognizant of the Trump administration's favoritism of Big Oil – [vowed](#) Dakota Access would be completed without deviation from a planned path under Lake Oahe.

Now, the two raids – and an increasingly intolerant attitude toward camped water protectors by both law enforcement and certain members of the tribal council – seem to evince coming action to evict and arrest water protectors still occupying

floodplain land at several camps, including the largest, main camp, Oceti Sakowin.

But the veterans group doesn't want to let that happen.

"Veterans Stand for Standing Rock started as a mission to shield water protectors and highlight human rights violations," states the Veterans Stand [website](#). "It grew into something that we never could have imagined. Veterans are people who take an oath and write a blank check to the United States of America, up to and including their life, to protect the Constitution from all enemies, both foreign and domestic [...]

"Our veterans have stepped up and chosen to serve, because there are still human and constitutional rights being violated. We are honored to serve beside them."

U.S. Navy veteran, Petty Officer 1st Class Kash Jackson came to Standing Rock to stand in defiance of the government-backed industry exploitation of Native Americans, telling a reporter from The Young Turks in November, about [marching](#) with an inverted American flag,

"Our greatest enemies are not overseas – our greatest enemies are right here."

Per the U.S. Flag Code, he continued, *"whenever you invert the American flag, it is permissible, underneath extreme risk to life and property – and **based on what I've witnessed, over here in Standing Rock, I don't think there's any question whether or not there's a risk to life and property.**"*

Several violent attacks led by police against unarmed and prayerful water protectors have left hundreds injured – several permanently – and have fueled worldwide consternation over the U.S. government's corporate fealty.

But, given [concerted efforts](#) by ETP – whose CEO Kelcy Warren [donated](#) \$100,000 to the president's campaign – to ensure the

oil flowing through the Dakota Access Pipeline would be legally permitted for export and profit, anti-pipeline actions around the country should expect similarly oppressive measures from the Trump administration.

With water protectors vehement about staying put in Standing Rock to halt construction of Dakota Access Pipeline for good, assistance from Veterans Stand will undoubtedly be welcome.

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