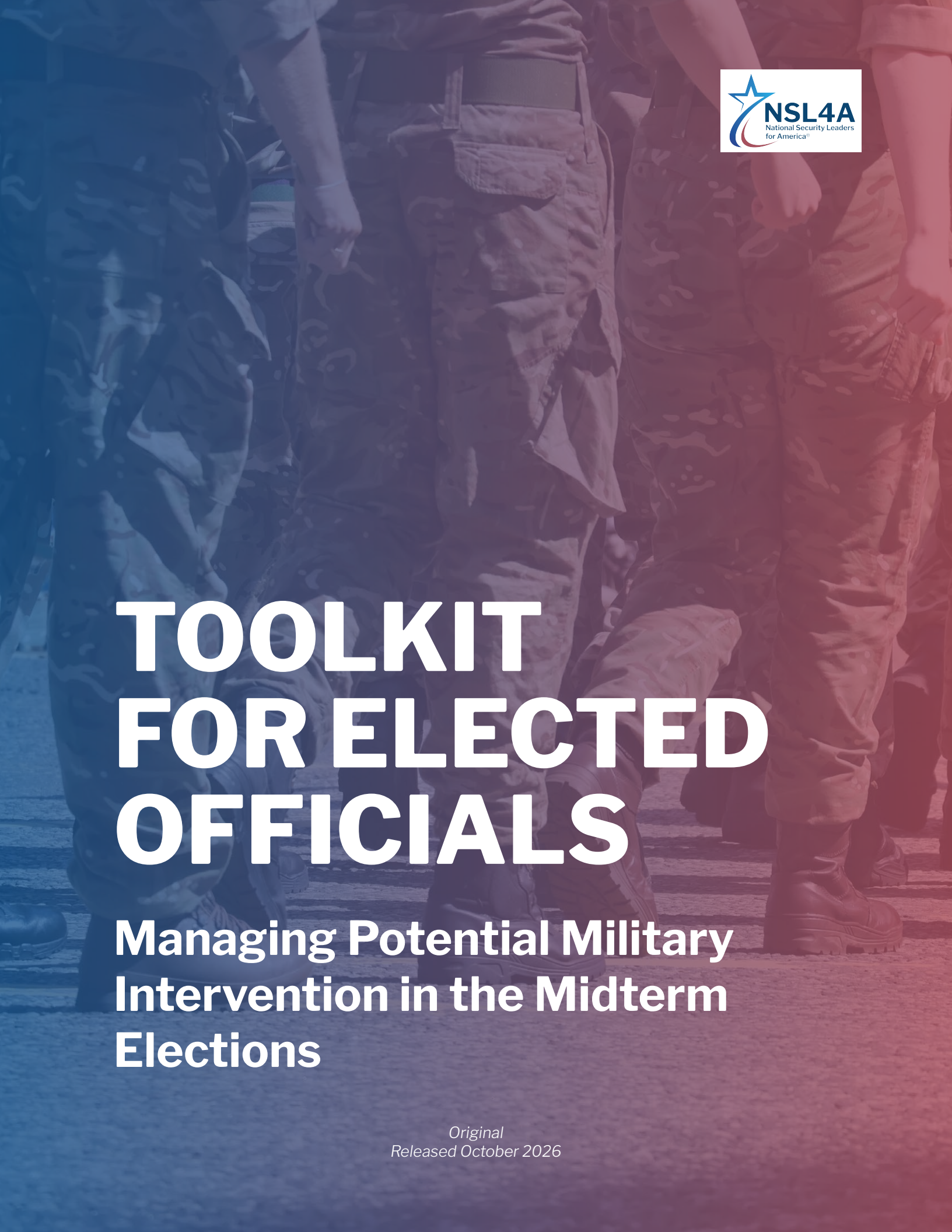

NSL4A
National Security Leaders for America®

TOOLKIT FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS

Managing Potential Military Intervention in the Midterm Elections

Original
Released October 2026

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit is provided by National Security Leaders for America and national organizations under the aegis of the Horizons Project to help mayors, county executives and other elected officials prepare to respond to a potential military intervention in their communities before, during, and after the midterm elections. We address two distinct scenarios in which the Administration could arguably claim authority to deploy the military, and thus potentially affect the election outcome in key races by either suppressing voter turnout or confiscating voting machines and other election materials. In both scenarios, the military will be operating under what are initially presented as lawful orders.

The Administration could choose to invoke the Insurrection Act in response to civil unrest, deploying the military to protect civil order or to enforce federal law while effectively suppressing voter turnout in a major city. In a second scenario, military forces may be deployed to confiscate voting machines to protect against alleged hacking or other corruption of those machines by a foreign government with the potential of breaking the chain of custody of legally filed votes and impacting election results.

These two scenarios are not being addressed in otherwise robust election protection efforts being coordinated nationally. This toolkit addresses that gap. Protecting the elections requires a **whole-of-civil-society response** involving elected officials, law enforcement, election administrators, lawyers, faith, labor, business, veterans, and civic groups acting together under local leadership.

Scenario 1: Invocation of the Insurrection Act:

By invoking the Insurrection Act, the President can exercise his authority to deploy federal forces for domestic law enforcement in limited circumstances, whether or not requested by the Governor, if the local situation is characterized as one where local law enforcement and the courts are no longer able to enforce local or federal law.

For example, in the weeks before the election, the Administration could claim that due to civil unrest in response to ICE or CBP actions, the mayor/county executive and local law enforcement are unable to maintain order and the judicial system is unable to properly function. Under these circumstances, the President could invoke the Insurrection Act and call up the military, deploying them to key cities to counter the growing protests, resulting in all likelihood in suppressing voter turnout in order to try to influence the election outcome.

As soon as civil unrest begins, it is the role of the mayor/county executive, local law enforcement, the judiciary and election officials to calmly but emphatically assert that the local situation is fully under control, on a daily if not more frequent public basis, until the crisis has passed. The Governor may also decide to deploy National Guard troops under the Governor's authority to assist in maintaining civil order, in order to preempt any argument that regular military forces are needed.

Scenario 2: Use of the military to address an attack by a foreign government:

The Posse Comitatus Act prohibits the use of the military for domestic law enforcement purposes. Deploying the military to polling places is also specifically prohibited by criminal statute. Both laws have a common glaring exception: they do not prevent use of the military to respond to armed attacks.

Using that specific and legal exception, the Administration could claim that a foreign government (e.g., Iran, Russia, China) has conducted cyberattacks against or otherwise corrupted voting machines in some key target cities and deploy the military to polling places and/or ballot collection/counting facilities to confiscate voting machines and ballots and impact election results. In this scenario, the military could be at polling sites legally.

The mayor/county executive and law enforcement, in collaboration with civil society organizations, must work together to maintain order, encourage voters to keep voting, and support the efforts of election officials to protect the chain of custody of votes already cast.

Responses to the two scenarios:
We identified simple solutions to address these scenarios

Scenario 1: Insurrection Act invoked

The Risk: Troops would suppress voter turnout.

Solution: Daily press conferences as soon as civil unrest commences.

Scenario 2: Attack on voting machines

The Risk: Troops break chain of custody.

Solution: Work with affected polling sites to protect the chain of custody of voted ballots. Help direct voters to other sites when necessary.

The material that follows includes three sections:

1. **Preparing for the Elections** (*Page 4*),
2. **Insurrection Act Responses** (*Page 6*), and
3. **Responding to Deployment of Military on or after Election Day** (*Page 11*).

In addition, appendices after each section can include communication protocols, a public handout, and a checklist for election day. *(Please note that some appendices appear in multiple sections.)*

***Questions?** Need additional information? Please contact National Security Leaders for America at ElectionSecurity@nsl4ams.org.*

SECTION 1: PREPARING FOR THE ELECTIONS

1. Lock down an understanding of legal authority and the law

- **Brief with the City/County Attorney.** Direct the City/County Attorney to: identify state law(s) which augment the federal prohibitions on military forces in the vicinity of polling places; and line up potential plaintiffs and draft emergency filings with the State AG and partner litigators. Focus particularly on laws and precedent that would enable local actors to seek injunctive relief from the courts and do not rely just on criminal law enforcement.
- **Address security.** Request the Police Chief/County Sheriff to meet with the chief election administrator, other law enforcement agencies, District Attorney, and State National Guard leadership to establish roles and polling-place posture, and to establish/reinforce direct lines of communication.
- **Review the ballot chain of custody procedures.** Ask the chief elections administrator to confirm ballot-handling protocols, backup supplies, and documentation, and request they add a "military presence" scenario to poll-worker training or direction.

2. Build the coalition before you need it

- **Engage local partners.** Direct Community Engagement officials to confirm contacts in faith, labor, business, veterans, legal, and civic groups and link them to the Joint Information Center (below) to prepare them to act if military troops are deployed prior to the election and/or during voting near polling places or ballot counting locations.
- **Put trusted faces at the polls.** Encourage faith, labor, and veterans partners to recruit poll workers, peacekeepers, and de-escalation volunteers for high-risk precincts.

3. Prepare the public without scaring it

- **State repeatedly that you expect a normal election.**
- **Encourage early voting, voting by mail, using ballot drop boxes, and voting together.** Promote early and mail voting, using ballot drop boxes and neighborhood vote-together events. Early voters cannot be intimidated on election day if they have already voted.
- **Distribute the Know-Your-Rights handout** in every major language through schools, congregations, unions, and libraries. Post on appropriate official websites. (*Appendix 1*).

4. Establish a Joint Information Center

Link elections, law enforcement, communications, and partners. Pre-translate statements. Ensure that everyone is clear that any claims of interference are verified before anyone makes a public statement.

Appendix 1: WHAT THE PUBLIC NEEDS TO KNOW

VOTE SAFELY IN [CITY]: What to do if you see soldiers at the polls

[Translate into Spanish and [OTHER LANGUAGES]. Add the City seal and official contact.]

YOUR VOTE IS PROTECTED. It is a federal crime for anyone, including government officials, to intimidate, threaten, or coerce a voter. You do not have to speak English or pass any test to vote. If anyone challenges your right to vote, you can still cast a provisional ballot before you leave.

BEFORE YOU GO

- **Make a plan.** Check your registration and polling place at [ELECTION WEBSITE].
- **Vote early, ballot drop box or by mail** if you can; early voting runs [DATES].
- **Vote together.** Go with family, friends, or neighbors. Family members who are not citizens may come with you, but they may choose to stay home.
- **Bring the ID your state requires:** [STATE ID RULE].
- **Save the hotline:** 866-OUR-VOTE (866-687-8683).

IF YOU SEE SOLDIERS OR AGENTS

- **Stay calm and keep a safe distance.** You still have the right to go in and vote.
- **Tell a poll worker** quietly, if you feel uncomfortable.
- **Write down what you see:** how many, what uniform or patches, what they are doing, where, and when.
- **Report it** to 866-OUR-VOTE. You can report anonymously.
- **Film only from a distance, and only where state law allows it.** No filming inside the polling place [CHECK STATE LAW]. If filming could escalate things, take notes instead.

IF YOU ARE STOPPED OR QUESTIONED

- **Stay calm. Keep your hands visible.** Never run, resist, or obstruct.
- **Ask: "Am I free to go?"** If the answer is yes, walk away calmly.
- **You can stay silent.** Say: "I want to remain silent." If you are detained, say: "I want a lawyer."
- **You do not have to consent to a search.** Say: "I do not consent to a search," but do not physically resist.
- **You do not have to unlock your phone** without a warrant.
- **Naturalized citizens** may choose to carry proof of citizenship to avoid a mistaken stop.

PLEASE DON'T

- **Don't confront, block, or argue with** soldiers, agents, or police.
- **Don't post rumors.** Unverified posts scare neighbors away from voting; report instead.
- **Don't protest near the polls.** Peaceful gatherings belong at [DESIGNATED AREA].
- **Don't give up.** If you are turned away, call the hotline before you leave.

GET HELP (free, confidential): English 866-OUR-VOTE (866-687-8683)
Español 888-VE-Y-VOTA (888-839-8682) · **Asian languages** 888-API-VOTE (888-274-8683)
Arabic 844-YALLA-US · **ASL video** 301-818-VOTE · **Emergency:** 911 · [COUNTY] **Elections:** [PHONE]

Sources: Brennan Center, "Vote Safely in 2026"; ACLU; Common Cause; Georgetown ICAP. This handout is general information, not legal advice.

SECTION 2: INSURRECTION ACT RESPONSES

Federal officials may claim local protests, external agents, or other "threats" require invocation of the Insurrection Act and the deployment of the military to target cities before election day.

To counter the potential for Federal or State authorities to use protests or incidents as justification for intervention

1. Monitor, verify, activate

- **Verify first.** Get facts from the Police Chief/County Sheriff regarding the scale of protests or other incidents as they develop so you can take actions to undermine justifications for military intervention; ***do not rely*** just on social media.
- **Activate the Joint Information Center (JIC).** Ensure the elections director, Police Chief/County Sheriff, City/County Attorney, Communications Director, and partner liaisons are available or even in one room.

2. Put officials on notice that intervention is unnecessary

- **Go public:** To establish that civilian authority, law enforcement, and the judicial system are functioning properly, hold a daily press conference, as soon as major protests begin, which includes the Police Chief/County Sheriff, elections director, judicial leadership and community leaders. Issue a daily press release (see communication plan in *Appendix 2A*) that emphasizes local authorities are maintaining order and that the police force and courts are functioning properly; demand written assurance that no troops will be deployed; and urge residents to maintain calm and to vote early. *These press conferences and press releases are critical to establishing a public record that no intervention is needed.* Continue daily until the threat of intervention has ceased or military forces have been withdrawn.

If there is a deployment of military troops

1. Verify, activate, calm

- Verify scale of intervention (who has shown up, how many, armed or not, what mission, under whose authority); ***do not rely*** just on social media.
- **Trigger the legal response.** Direct the City/County Attorney to move with the AG and partner litigators for emergency court orders to remove the forces or limit their activities.
- **Call up the chain.** Call the Governor, Congressional delegation, and state election officials, and demand that the military commander state the mission and their legal authority in writing.
- **Work with local partners to manage citizen engagement.** Engage with partner organizations to reduce the risk of physical confrontations between citizens and military forces. Encourage a calm and peaceful public response.
- **Continue going public:** Hold daily press conferences and issue daily press releases, emphasizing that public order is being maintained and that there is no need for the intervention. (*Appendix 2B*)

2. If Early Voting is underway, keep voting going

- **Every polling place stays open.** Publicly support the elections director in continuing voting operations, deploy backup staff and supplies, and log any closure or ballot removal minute by minute. The most reliable and effective evidence of any questionable events is video: encourage people to pull out their phones and use them if it is safe to do so and legally permitted.
- **Maintain Chain of Custody of the ballots.** Working with the election authorities, assist where requested to help protect ballots and voting records to the extent possible. Keep election officials aware of any unusual events potentially affecting voting.
- **Monitor turnout at affected polling sites.** If voting turnout is affected by a military presence, support election administrators in seeking court orders to extend voting hours and/or days.
- **Send trusted messengers to affected sites.** Deploy clergy, veterans, and trained peacekeepers to accompany voters and calm tensions.

3. Tell residents what to do, and what not to do (*Appendix 2B*)

- **Do:** go vote, bring a friend, stay calm, keep a safe distance, video and write down what you see, and report it to 866-OUR-VOTE or a poll worker. If stopped, ask "Am I free to go?", stay silent, and do not consent to a search.
- **Do not:** confront, block, touch, or provoke military personnel; post unverified sightings; or protest near the polls.

***Questions?** Need additional information? Please contact National Security Leaders for America at ElectionSecurity@nsl4ams.org.*

Appendix 2A: Communications Protocol

Before military forces have been deployed

Communications Objectives:

- **Establish the facts and a public record** so that local government, law enforcement, courts, and election officials can carry out their responsibilities. A public record of those facts may also assist with legal challenges to federal actions.
- **Reduce the potential justification** for intervention by demonstrating that local authorities remain in control.
- **Maintain public confidence and voter participation** by reassuring residents that election operations are continuing.
- **Promote calm and de-escalation**, particularly around protests, polling locations, and election facilities.
- **Ensure message discipline** among elected officials, law enforcement, election officials, and community partners.

Communications Actions:

- Conduct a daily coordinated press conference as soon as practicable.
- Issue a daily written press release.
- Establish a regular communications cadence.
- Correct significant misinformation quickly.
- Document public statements and developments.
- Prepare communications materials before escalation occurs.
- Use trusted community messengers to reinforce-calm, non-confrontation, and continued voter participation.

CORE MESSAGE

- Local authorities remain in control.
- Our law enforcement agencies, courts, and election operations are functioning normally.
- Federal or military assistance has not been requested and is not needed.
- Residents should remain calm, and voters should continue to participate confidently in the election.

Supporting talking points may include:

- Local law enforcement is maintaining public safety and protecting access to voting.
- Election officials and poll workers are trained and prepared.
- Protests should remain peaceful and should not interfere with voting.
- Community leaders and organizations are prepared to assist voters.
- Residents should rely on official sources for verified information.
- Election officials remain responsible for administering the election.
- Courts and election operations remain functional.
- Polling locations remain open unless election officials announce otherwise.

***Questions?** Need additional information? Please contact National Security Leaders for America at ElectionSecurity@nsl4ams.org.*

If military forces are deployed under the Insurrection Act:

Communications Objectives:

- **Continue to reduce the justification for intervention** - Demonstrate continued civilian control by establishing that local government, law enforcement, courts, and election operations are functioning normally.
- **Prevent confrontation or escalation** between residents, protesters, law enforcement, and military personnel.
- **Maintain voter confidence and participation**, particularly if early voting or Election Day voting is underway.
- **Establish a factual public record** of the deployment, local conditions, and its impact on voting.

Communications Actions:

- Conduct a daily coordinated press conference.
- Issue a daily written press release.
- Continue a regular communications cadence.
- Correct significant misinformation quickly.
- Document public statements and developments.
- Use trusted community messengers to reinforce calm, non-confrontation, and continued voter participation.

Core Message

- Local authorities remain in control and are continuing to carry out their responsibilities.
- Our law enforcement agencies, courts, and election operations are functioning normally.
- We did not request military intervention and do not believe it is necessary.
- Any questions concerning the deployment's legal basis will be addressed through the appropriate governmental and judicial processes.
- Residents should remain calm, avoid confrontation, and continue to vote.
- Local officials are working through appropriate legal and governmental channels to address the deployment.

Supporting talking points may include:

- Local law enforcement is maintaining public safety and protecting access to voting.
- Community leaders and organizations are prepared to assist voters.
- Residents should rely on official sources for verified information.
- Election officials remain responsible for administering the election.
- Polling locations remain open unless election officials announce otherwise.
- Voting should continue wherever election officials determine operations can safely proceed.
- Ballots, voting equipment, and election records should remain under established chain of custody procedures.Residents should not confront, block, touch, or provoke military personnel.
- Peaceful protest should occur away from polling locations and military personnel.

***Questions?** Need additional information? Please contact National Security Leaders for America at ElectionSecurity@nsl4ams.org.*

Appendix 2B: WHAT THE PUBLIC NEEDS TO KNOW

VOTE SAFELY IN [CITY]: What to do if you see soldiers at the polls

[Translate into Spanish and [OTHER LANGUAGES]. Add the City seal and official contact.]

YOUR VOTE IS PROTECTED. It is a federal crime for anyone, including government officials, to intimidate, threaten, or coerce a voter. You do not have to speak English or pass any test to vote. If anyone challenges your right to vote, you can still cast a provisional ballot before you leave.

BEFORE YOU GO

- **Make a plan.** Check your registration and polling place at [ELECTION WEBSITE].
- **Vote early, ballot drop box or by mail** if you can; early voting runs [DATES].
- **Vote together.** Go with family, friends, or neighbors. Family members who are not citizens may come with you, but they may choose to stay home.
- **Bring the ID your state requires:** [STATE ID RULE].
- **Save the hotline:** 866-OUR-VOTE (866-687-8683).

IF YOU SEE SOLDIERS OR AGENTS

- **Stay calm and keep a safe distance.** You still have the right to go in and vote.
- **Tell a poll worker** quietly, if you feel uncomfortable.
- **Write down what you see:** how many, what uniform or patches, what they are doing, where, and when.
- **Report it** to 866-OUR-VOTE. You can report anonymously.
- **Film only from a distance, and only where state law allows it.** No filming inside the polling place [CHECK STATE LAW]. If filming could escalate things, take notes instead.

IF YOU ARE STOPPED OR QUESTIONED

- **Stay calm. Keep your hands visible.** Never run, resist, or obstruct.
- **Ask: "Am I free to go?"** If the answer is yes, walk away calmly.
- **You can stay silent.** Say: "I want to remain silent." If you are detained, say: "I want a lawyer."
- **You do not have to consent to a search.** Say: "I do not consent to a search," but do not physically resist.
- **You do not have to unlock your phone** without a warrant.
- **Naturalized citizens** may choose to carry proof of citizenship to avoid a mistaken stop.

PLEASE DON'T

- **Don't confront, block, or argue with** soldiers, agents, or police.
- **Don't post rumors.** Unverified posts scare neighbors away from voting; report instead.
- **Don't protest near the polls.** Peaceful gatherings belong at [DESIGNATED AREA].
- **Don't give up.** If you are turned away, call the hotline before you leave.

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Sources: Brennan Center, "Vote Safely in 2026"; ACLU; Common Cause; Georgetown ICAP. This handout is general information, not legal advice.

SECTION 3: RESPONDING TO DEPLOYMENT OF THE MILITARY ON OR AFTER ELECTION DAY

The Administration may state that a cyber-attack or other attempt to interfere in the election by a foreign or terrorist power has occurred and justifies a legal intervention by the military. Until determined otherwise by the courts, this deployment must be treated as legal.

Three goals: Keep polling places open; keep residents calm, informed and voting; maintain chain of custody of ballots. *A minute-by-minute checklist is Appendix 3A.*

1. Verify and activate

- **Verify first.** Get facts from the Police Chief/County Sheriff and poll managers on site (what military forces are present, how many, armed or not, what mission, under whose authority). Do not rely just on social media.
- **Activate the Joint Information Center (JIC).** Ensure the elections director, Police Chief/County Sheriff, City/County Attorney, Communications Director, and partner liaisons are available or even in one room.
- **Trigger the legal response.** Direct the City/County Attorney to move with the AG and partner litigators for emergency court orders to challenge the deployment of the military and to extend polling hours if voting is disrupted.
- **Call up the chain.** Coordinate with the Governor, Congressional delegation, and state election officials; demand that the federal commander state explicitly in writing the nature and extent of the mission and its legal authority.

2. Keep voting going

- **Every polling place stays open.** As long as a polling site is not physically disrupted, support the elections director in continuing operations, deploy backup staff and supplies, and, if necessary, log and record any closure or ballot removal.
- **Maintain Chain of Custody of the ballots.** Working with election authorities, assist where requested to protect ballots and voting records to the extent possible if voting machines and materials are threatened with seizure by the military.
- **Monitor turnout at affected precincts.** If voting turnout is affected by a military presence, support election officials in seeking in court extended voting hours or days.
- **Send trusted messengers to affected sites.** Deploy clergy, veterans, and trained peacekeepers to accompany voters and calm tensions.

3. Speak to the public

- **As soon as possible after military deployment, hold a joint press conference** with the Police Chief/County Sheriff, elections director, judicial leadership and community leaders, and issue a press release *(see communication plan in Appendix 3B)*. State that, until proven otherwise, the deployment of the military must be considered to be properly within the legitimate power of the President, and that the public should not physically confront military forces, but should continue voting where possible.

Let the lawyers test the legitimacy of the President's action in the proper forum. Otherwise, there is a risk that heated public reaction may become an excuse to deploy even more military personnel under the Insurrection Act.

- **Speak with one voice.** Brief the City Council, the Congressional delegation, and partner leaders so every official repeats the same facts and the same call to vote. If possible, request the Congressional delegation to independently verify the validity of the claimed intelligence reporting.
- **Repeat the hotline everywhere:** 866-OUR-VOTE, plus the Spanish, Asian-language, and Arabic lines.

4. Tell residents what to do, and what not to do (*Appendix 3C*)

- **Do:** go vote, bring a friend, stay calm, keep a safe distance, video and write down what you see, and report it to
- 866-OUR-VOTE or a poll worker. If stopped, ask "Am I free to go?", stay silent, and do not consent to a search.
- **Do not:** confront, block, touch, or provoke military personnel; post unverified sightings; or protest near the polls.

5. Set the police posture

- **Police protect voters, not the federal operation.** Keep officers present near affected sites but not intimidating, keep space between troops and residents, stop impersonators and armed intimidators, and document everything.
- **Protect peaceful protest, away from the polls.** Designate protest zones outside the electioneering buffer and away from military forces; staff them for de-escalation.

6. Close the day strong

- **Comply with poll closing procedures:** work with election officials to confirm and emphasize that anyone in line can still vote, confirm ballots are moving under documented custody, thank voters, and set the next update time; keep the Joint Information Center staffed as long as needed.
- **Protect the voting process from count through certification.** Work with election officials to maintain the integrity of the election and voting process and the security of election personnel through certification.
- **Stand with targeted communities.** Meet with affected neighborhoods and connect residents with legal and support services, as needed.

Appendix 3A: ACTION ITEMS ON ELECTION DAY

Run this checklist from the Joint Information Center (JIC). Log the time and the responsible lead for every decision.

☐	Action	Lead
BEFORE POLLS OPEN ([5:00–7:00 a.m.])		
☐	Stand up the JIC: Police Chief/County Sheriff, City/County Attorney, Communications Director, and partner liaisons.	Chief of Staff
☐	Confirm live contacts with the Governor's office, state election director, local election officials, AG, law enforcement, National Guard commander/liaison, and national Election Protection war room.	Chief of Staff
☐	Brief police supervisors on the polling-place posture.	Police Chief
☐	Prepare press release, translations, and hotline graphics; put the spokesperson on standby.	Communications
☐	Confirm that the Election Administrator has what is needed from the city.	Elections Director
☐	Confirm peacekeepers, clergy, and veteran volunteers are at priority precincts.	Community Engagement
WHEN MILITARY PRESENCE IS REPORTED (first 60 minutes)		
☐	**Verify on site:** a police supervisor and the poll manager confirm the unit or agency, headcount, whether personnel are armed, their activity, the stated mission and authority, and the commander's name.	Police Chief
☐	Open the incident log: time, location, facts, witnesses, photos or video (where lawful).	Elections / Police
☐	Notify the State AG and partner litigators; prepare an emergency motion to challenge the presence of the military and extend hours.	City/County Attorney
☐	Mayor/County Executive calls the Governor; request the military commander's mission and legal authority in writing. Notify Congressional delegation.	Mayor/County Executive
☐	Issue a statement within 30 minutes: "We are aware, we are gathering facts.", and, where known, the polls that are closed and that are open.	Communications
☐	Send trusted messengers and de-escalation teams to the affected site(s).	Community Engagement
THROUGHOUT THE DAY		
☐	Hold the joint press conference and issue the press release *(See communications plan in Appendix 3B)* within 2 hours; update at least every [3] hours or as needed.	Mayor/County Executive / Communications
☐	Log every ballot movement (chain of custody); provide a police escort only at election officials' request.	Elections / Police
☐	Monitor rumors; correct them quickly with verified facts and never repeat a false claim.	Communications
☐	Staff designated protest zones away from polling places; keep troops and residents apart.	Police Chief
☐	Track turnout at affected precincts; if voting is disrupted, seek a court order extending hours.	City/County Attorney
POLLS CLOSE AND OVERNIGHT		
☐	Reaffirm that anyone in line at closing time can still vote; keep observers at affected sites.	Elections / Communications
☐	Offer police support to transport ballots and memory devices via regular chain of custody.	Police Chief
☐	Evening statement: thank voters, confirm ballots are secure, and set the next update time.	Mayor/County Executive
☐	Keep the JIC staffed; preserve all logs and video; brief the City Council.	Chief of Staff

Appendix 3B: COMMUNICATIONS PROTOCOL

Communications Objectives:

- **Maintain public calm and confidence** while establishing facts about the claimed attack and federal response.
- **Keep voters participating** wherever voting can safely continue.
- **Project confidence in election administration and ballot security**, particularly if federal forces are presently at polling sites.
- **Treat the deployment as lawful unless and until a court rules**, rather than publicly asserting at the outset that the deployment itself is unwarranted.

Communications Actions:

- Conduct a coordinated press conference as early as possible.
- Issue a written press release.
- Establish a regular communications cadence.
- Correct significant misinformation quickly.
- Document public statements and developments.
- Use trusted community messengers to reinforce calm, non-confrontation, and continued voter participation.

Core Message

- Federal authorities have claimed that the deployment is in response to a foreign threat to the election.
- Local officials are working to verify the facts, understand the mission and authority of the deployed forces, and protect continued voting and ballot security.
- Any questions concerning the deployment's legal basis will be addressed through the appropriate governmental and judicial processes.
- Residents should remain calm, avoid confrontation, and continue to vote wherever polling remains open.
- State which polling locations are affected—and which remain open and if there are any time extensions voting.
- Local authorities are working to protect voter access and the security of ballots and election materials.

Supporting talking points may include:

- Local officials are coordinating with state and federal authorities to determine the nature and extent of the claimed threat.
- Residents should not confront, block, touch, or provoke military personnel.
- Local law enforcement is maintaining public safety and protecting access to voting and courts and election operations remain functional.
- Voting should continue wherever election officials determine operations can safely proceed.
- Community leaders and organizations are prepared to assist voters.
- Ballots, voting equipment, and election records should remain under established chain-of-custody procedures.
- Peaceful protest should occur away from polling locations and military personnel.
- Residents should rely only on official sources for verified information.

Questions? Need additional information?
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Appendix 3C: WHAT THE PUBLIC NEEDS TO KNOW

VOTE SAFELY IN [CITY]: What to do if you see soldiers at the polls

[Translate into Spanish and [OTHER LANGUAGES]. Add the City seal and official contact.]

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BEFORE YOU GO

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- **Vote together.** Go with family, friends, or neighbors. Family members who are not citizens may come with you, but they may choose to stay home.
- **Bring the ID your state requires:** [STATE ID RULE].
- **Save the hotline:** 866-OUR-VOTE (866-687-8683).

IF YOU SEE SOLDIERS OR AGENTS

- **Stay calm and keep a safe distance.** You still have the right to go in and vote.
- **Tell a poll worker** quietly, if you feel uncomfortable.
- **Write down what you see:** how many, what uniform or patches, what they are doing, where, and when.
- **Report it** to 866-OUR-VOTE. You can report anonymously.
- **Film only from a distance, and only where state law allows it.** No filming inside the polling place [CHECK STATE LAW]. If filming could escalate things, take notes instead.

IF YOU ARE STOPPED OR QUESTIONED

- **Stay calm. Keep your hands visible.** Never run, resist, or obstruct.
- **Ask: "Am I free to go?"** If the answer is yes, walk away calmly.
- **You can stay silent.** Say: "I want to remain silent." If you are detained, say: "I want a lawyer."
- **You do not have to consent to a search.** Say: "I do not consent to a search," but do not physically resist.
- **You do not have to unlock your phone** without a warrant.
- **Naturalized citizens** may choose to carry proof of citizenship to avoid a mistaken stop.

PLEASE DON'T

- **Don't confront, block, or argue with** soldiers, agents, or police.
- **Don't post rumors.** Unverified posts scare neighbors away from voting; report instead.
- **Don't protest near the polls.** Peaceful gatherings belong at [DESIGNATED AREA].
- **Don't give up.** If you are turned away, call the hotline before you leave.

GET HELP (free, confidential): English 866-OUR-VOTE (866-687-8683)
Español 888-VE-Y-VOTA (888-839-8682) · **Asian languages** 888-API-VOTE (888-274-8683)
Arabic 844-YALLA-US · **ASL video** 301-818-VOTE · **Emergency:** 911 · [COUNTY] **Elections:** [PHONE]

Sources: Brennan Center, "Vote Safely in 2026"; ACLU; Common Cause; Georgetown ICAP. This handout is general information, not legal advice.

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