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JUAN GONZÁLEZ: This is *Democracy Now!*, democracynow.org, *The War and Peace Report*. I'm Juan González, in for Amy Goodman. Amy is on assignment.

In North Dakota, more than 100 Native Americans and allies fighting the \$3.8 billion Dakota Access pipeline have been injured by police who attacked them with rubber bullets, tear gas, mace canisters and water cannons in freezing temperatures Sunday night. The attack began after the water protectors attempted to clear access to a public bridge, which has been blocked by authorities using military equipment chained to concrete barriers. Legal observers with the National Lawyers Guild said multiple people temporarily lost consciousness after being shot. Witnesses say one elder also went into cardiac arrest and was revived on the scene by medics. Many people were treated for hypothermia after being hit by water cannons in freezing temperatures. Water protectors say the police also fired rubber bullets at journalists, shot down drones being used to document the attack. Both the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe sent medical first aid responders. This is Angela Bibens, a lawyer with the Red Owl Legal Collective, speaking in a telephone interview recorded by Dallas Goldtooth Sunday.

ANGELA BIBENS: Right now we've seen people who have been maced. They deployed 20 mace canisters in a small area in less than five minutes, to the point where people have lost bowel function. At least one seizure has been witnessed at the front lines by our legal observation team. There have been people vomiting from the exposure to the mace. The water cannon has been mixed with the mace, and so even our legal observers have been exposed and are trying to deal with that while they're doing up their notes. And canisters were shot at the medic area at the front line. There is at least one woman who has a broken kneecap. At least one elder went into cardiac arrest and was revived through CPR at the front line by medics.

JUAN GONZÁLEZ: Sunday's attack comes as water protectors face an increasingly militarized crackdown against the movement to stop the Dakota Access pipeline over concerns the construction will destroy sacred tribal burial sites and that a pipeline spill could contaminate the Missouri River. The state of North Dakota has approved \$10 million to police the ongoing resistance. North Dakota Governor Jack Dalrymple has activated the National Guard. Over 400 people have been arrested during the ongoing protests, and many report being subjected

to strip searches while in the Morton County jail in North Dakota.

The water protectors have also faced attacks and surveillance from private security companies working for the Dakota Access pipeline company. On September 3rd, unlicensed private security guards unleashed attack dogs on Native Americans trying to protect a tribal burial site from destruction. The private security firm TigerSwan security is in charge of coordinating intelligence for the Dakota Access pipeline company. TigerSwan has links to the now-defunct mercenary firm Blackwater.

For more, we're joined by *Intercept* reporter Jeremy Scahill, who has spent years reporting on private security contractors, including TigerSwan.

Welcome back, Jeremy. What about the situation in North Dakota?

JEREMY SCAHILL: Well, I mean—well, first of all, let's remember that we're speaking a week when there's the big American holiday, Thanksgiving, and I always think of the slaughter of the indigenous people in this country around this time of year and people like Leonard Peltier, the political prisoner who—unfortunately, it seems like yet another president is going to leave office without pardoning Leonard Peltier. But to watch what we're seeing come out of the protesters on this—the protectors on this indigenous land, facing down against environmental-destroying companies, you know, really brings home the kind of utter hypocrisy of the narrative about the United States of America. But also, if you look at the way that these indigenous people and their supporters are being treated versus the Bundy ranchers, you know, who didn't occupy their native land—they went and they took over federal land with weapons and ended up getting acquitted, including of the charges that they were very clearly guilty of, which is all these weapons possession charges—and it makes you wonder, if this is the state of affairs under President Obama, who actually has visited Native reservations and Native territories, what's going to happen under Trump?

And this firm, TigerSwan, was founded by a Delta Force operative named James Reese and has done voluminous amounts of covert and overt work for the U.S. military in Iraq, in Afghanistan and elsewhere around the world. And, you know, you realize that you have this convergence of all that has been so wrong in the post-9/11 world, with these big environment-destroying companies, the stripping even further of indigenous rights, private security forces, the brutality against protesters, the paramilitarization of law enforcement. And now our incoming president—I still feel strange saying that—Donald Trump also has business

connections to the pipeline project? Is he going to divest? Is he going to—I mean, like, this is going to go from the level of Obama just being, you know, really bad on these policies to Trump actively trying to make it worse for the environment.

JUAN GONZÁLEZ: Well, in a recent interview, the head of the company behind the Dakota Access pipeline, Kelcy Warren of Energy Transfer Partners, said he's 100 percent confident that Trump will support the completion of the Dakota Access pipeline. Kelcy Warren has donated more than \$100,000 to Trump's campaign, while Trump himself has between \$500,000 and a million dollars invested in Energy Transfer Partners, according to his own disclosures.

JEREMY SCAHILL: Oh, no, and I remember, you know, you and I were talking about this back when—you know, when Cheney was coming in, and then we were talking about Enron, and we were talking about the people that they put on their commission about energy. You know, Trump's choice of who he's going to put in as energy secretary or secretary of the interior—they're even talking about potentially Sarah Palin being the interior secretary. But, you know, I don't know, was like, you know, Ronald McDonald not available? I mean, it's really sick, some of the people. You know, putting Mike Huckabee in charge of health and human services, a guy who said that abortion is like worse than the Holocaust? And, I mean, it really feels like we're watching a not-so-slowly moving train wreck in this country right now.

JUAN GONZÁLEZ: Or even floating the idea that Joe Arpaio, who's just been voted out as Maricopa County sheriff, would become head of homeland security.

JEREMY SCAHILL: Right.

JUAN GONZÁLEZ: Although at 82 years old, I doubt that he wants to come to Washington.

JEREMY SCAHILL: Yeah. It would be an amusing, you know, Senate confirmation hearing. I mean, what's potentially more likely, but in the same category, is Sheriff David Clarke of Milwaukee County, who has, you know, said—called Black Lives Matter—he's African-American himself, but has called Black Lives Matter subhuman, has said that there is no such thing as police brutality, who led the chants of "Blue lives matter" at the Republican National Convention and is a regular on Bill O'Reilly's show and others on—and Hannity on

Fox News.

Juan, one thing I forgot to mention when we were talking about the Cabinet that Trump is putting together on the national security level, we should remember that national security adviser is not Senate-confirmed. And it's an extraordinarily powerful position that is—has definitions going back to 1947, but basically is like a parallel, unaccountable national security apparatus, and it's very secretive how it operates, and it's up to the whims of a particular administration. But also, Flynn and Mattis, if Mattis is to be defense secretary, would require waivers to be issued for them, because you're not allowed to go from uniform within the last seven years to a civilian position without a waiver from Congress. Why is that? It's because there has to be chain of command where civilians are directing the military; otherwise, you start to veer into territory of a military dictatorship or a military state. And it seems like that's part of what Trump actually wants. It could be coincidence that these guys were just recent military people. But you do have to, because it's Trump, take into account the possibility that he really does want what amounts to a dictatorship of the executive branch, where these policies actually are dictated by the military and not necessarily the civilian chain of command, outside of him and Pence.

JUAN GONZÁLEZ: I think we have about a minute left, but, Jeremy, I wanted to ask you, in terms of the—you reached out to the Morton County Sheriff's Office to try to get some information on the private security firms. What happened?

JEREMY SCAHILL: Well, the Morton County sheriffs, they released documents, internal documents, about their investigation into the dog handlers. And what they inadvertently revealed was that this company, TigerSwan, run by these Delta Force guys, was actually in charge of coordinating the intelligence operations against the protesters.

One word of advice to all the protesters there: Do not believe that your cellphones or your computers are clean and uncompromised. I guarantee you that they're using the entire suite of surveillance devices. I know that people have been complaining that their cellphones have been down, their internet has been down. That can be caused by surveillance weaponry targeting their devices. It could be because there are so many people using them. But my guess would be that they are using people's devices, meaning law enforcement and private security, as geo-tracking devices. And people should be very aware that the full CIA/NSA-developed suite of tools that now have made it into the hands of local law enforcement in this country are most certainly trained on those activists and their supporters.