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June 3, 2020
Washington, D.C.

D.C. Mayor Bowser Expresses "Shock and

Outrage" After Peaceful Protestors Not Violating Curfew Teargassed and Shot At With Rubber Bullets by Federal Police, White House Staff Judges Mayoral Leadership

District of Columbia Mayor Muriel Bowser said yesterday after peaceful protestors not in violation of the city's curfew, "We were very shocked and outraged that people who were not violating the curfew, and who did not seem to have provoked attack, were attacked in a move out by the federal law enforcement officials who were directed to clear the way for the President."

Last weekend brought unrest in our nation's capital over the death of George Floyd. She then moved up the curfew to 7:00 pm on Monday.

As the 7:00 pm curfew deadline ticked on the clock, President Donald Trump came to the podium in the Rose Garden with a strong tone, somewhat boisterous speech to the nation, "I will fight for you... I am your law and order President." The President went on to say, "If the city or state refuses to take actions that our necessary to defend the life and property of their residents, then I will deploy the United States Military and quickly solve the problem for them."

News reports indicate that it was Attorney General William Barr who gave the signal to teargas the peaceful protestors and fire at them with non-lethal ammunition about a half-hour before the 7:00 pm deadline.

The nation then watched as President Trump walked across Lafayette Square to hold up a bible on the side entrance of St. John's Church.

Mayor Bowser has continued expressing her concern about what happened here in D.C. on Monday evening, "We wanted to make sure that the Metropolitan Police Department could ensure that people could exercise their First Amendment rights but also protect our city from damage and destruction that we had seen the night before."

There was no question about the serious damage to the city over the weekend. Mayor Bowser's curfew was 11pm. She changed that curfew, as did a number

of other cities to avoid protestors after sundown. But a peaceful protest on Monday night turned into chaos as the military police shot non-lethal ammunition at protestors and hit them hard with teargas bombs before the curfew went into effect.

Mayor Bowser continues to say that using the United States Military armed forces is an "inappropriate use of our military... we don't think the active-duty military should be used on American streets against Americans."

As the security of our capital seems to be of primary concern of the White House, word is that infantry troops are on standby if needed.

Many are raising the question about the way the President conducted himself Monday evening and some say the entire spectacle of using teargas and rubber bullets to clear the area so he could walk over in front of the church, holding a bible was merely a photo op for him. He indicated as he ended his speech in the Rose Garden, "I am going to pay my respects to a very, very special place". That place was St. John's Church, the famous yellow church that has stood for centuries and where all presidents go to pray on Inauguration Day. Some observers thought the President was going to the church, enter it, and pay respect. Instead, he stood outside, holding a bible next to the side of the church where the basement was burned over the weekend.

The Washington Post reports that the idea of the President going to the church came from the President's daughter, Ivanka Trump.

There are many confusing explanations about what happened here Monday night and there have been some heated reactions since. The District of Columbia Attorney General Karl Racine said in a statement that D.C. was "now reckoning with an unhinged president responding to nonviolent demonstrations with war-like tactics."

Across the Potomac River in Arlington County, officials dispatched officers from a civil unrest unit in response from U.S. Park Police as part of a mutual aid agreement for the action in Lafayette Square. Said Arlington County Manager Mark Schwartz, "We were being used... we had been asked to do something that turned out to be a political stunt."

Administration officials have been vague and declining to comment on who did what at Lafayette Square, but they are quick to call out two mayors, Mayor Bowser and New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, as incompetent. This "full domination" tone continues from the governors' call on Monday where President Trump referred to governors as "jerks" and weak.

It is important to note from our organization that Mayor Bill de Blasio is a trustee of the United States Conference of Mayors, one of 19, elected by his peer mayors to serve on the Executive Committee, the highest peer-elected group of the United States Conference of Mayors. No one stands stronger for us on pushing the federal government to provide emergency fiscal assistance through the COVID-19 crisis. We appreciate his leadership and energy.

Mayor Bowser became the first woman ever re-elected in 2018 and the first mayor to earn a second term in 16 years. She, too, is an outstanding leader of the Conference of Mayors. Now serving on our Advisory Board. No DC mayor has opened up their city to us as Mayor Bowser does every January at our Winter Meeting.

And, needless to say, we work almost every day with the staff of Mayors de Blasio and Mayor Bowser here in Washington.

As your CEO and Executive Director, I struggle with the fact that the President of the United States and his senior staff call out accusations and derogatory comments to how mayors are governing their cities and serving the people they were elected to serve. No President has ever singled out a mayor by name as consistent as President Trump does. This is not the first time and it won't be the last. It is what it is, but it is not conducive to help us govern a diverse nation, a nation in the midst of this virus pandemic, and now with violent looters and peaceful protestors at the same time.

President Lyndon B. Johnson said being mayor of a large city was the toughest job in America.

Though this pandemic crisis, Presidents Clinton, Bush, and Obama have all spoke to our mayors on the Bloomberg Philanthropies Local Response Initiative Virtual Sessions and they have thanked the mayors and urged and used the word "empathy." President Trump appears to be devoid and bereft of empathy

and we just wish he would quit calling out mayors by name with ridicule. It doesn't help the tough situation our mayors are now struggling with... and that's millions of protestors. Some are coming in peace, some are coming in a rage of violence, coupled with people not of their city, and maybe not our country. All hope though, that peace will prevail and many wish President Trump would tone it down.

On the call yesterday was Doug Hoelscher, Director of the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, the top intergovernmental staff person, an unelected official, in the White House. This Administration official has echoed President Trump's direct criticism of Mayor Bowser, as well as Mayor de Blasio on the way the NYPD has performed since the death of Mr. Floyd in Minneapolis on Memorial Day.

He is the person who is supposed to be building new and maintaining relationships with local officials, not calling them out on bipartisan calls and judging them in a disparaging and political manner as he did this week. On the call that we promoted, Mr. Hoelscher stated, as if he is an expert on governing a city or running a police department, to declare that some mayors are doing a better job than others to confront looters, shooters, and peaceful protestors all at the same time. And further, to call out two mayors in the leadership of our organization.

Conference President Barnett, over the past few weeks in the midst of the pandemic and before, has been having one call after another every Friday to give The White House every opportunity to share what the Administration has been doing to keep us safe through this pandemic.

We realize that the mayors and police chiefs are in this together and we will come together to work on important reforms and to push for racial justice in our police departments and citywide.

Here's a Fact.

Ferguson, Missouri made history yesterday. Ella Jones was elected as the first African American elected and the first woman elected Mayor. Six years ago, the city and our nation were embroiled in protests over the killing of an unarmed

black 18-year-old teenager by a white police officer. Black Lives Matter was born. A jury there refused to indict the killer, Ferguson Police Officer Darren Wilson who claimed he acted in self-defense. He later resigned but was not fired.

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