

# Massachusetts politicians push back on Trump's military threat

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President Donald Trump on Monday said he wouldn't hesitate to deploy the military into American cities to forcefully quell violence, looting and vandalism if governors can't control the protests against police brutality occurring around the country. But the threat was met with resistance in Massachusetts, where the state's top law enforcement official described it as illegal and a "stupid thing to do."

Attorney General Maura Healey on Tuesday said that Trump "doesn't have the authority to say what he's going to do." And based on conversations with Massachusetts police, she's also worried that greater militarization will lead to more tension.

"We need to push for deescalation and a calming and restore a semblance of order," Healey said in a virtual appearance before the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce. "We don't need soldiers in our streets."

Healey's comments came the morning after U.S. Sen. Edward Markey described Trump's Rose Garden remarks as "un-American," and U.S. Rep. Joseph Kennedy said a military response to the anger being displayed on the streets would not work.

Trump on Monday evening addressed the escalation of protests around the country in the wake of the alleged murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis. Floyd died while in police custody with a police officer's knee on his neck.

"He will not have died in vain. But we cannot allow the

righteous cries and peaceful protesters to be drowned out by an angry mob," Trump said. "The biggest victims of the rioting are peace-loving citizens in our poorest communities, and as their President, I will fight to keep them safe. I will fight to protect you. I am your President of law and order, and an ally of all peaceful protesters."

The president called for "healing, not hatred" and "justice, not chaos," but his promise to "end it now" with military force, if necessary, seemed to have the opposite effect of uniting the country.

Presumptive Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden gave a speech in Philadelphia Tuesday morning pushing back on Trump's message, and Democrats in Massachusetts condemned his remarks.

Trump said he had urged governors to establish an "overwhelming law enforcement presence" to end the violence, and instituted a 7 p.m. curfew in Washington, D.C., where he also said he was "dispatching thousands and thousands of heavily armed soldiers, military personnel, and law enforcement officers."

"If a city or a state refuses to take the actions that are 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," Trump said.

The president made his comments from the Rose Garden at the White House just before Markey and Kennedy began a televised debate in Springfield in their Democratic primary race for Senate.

Markey said after the debate the president was "throwing fuel on an already raging fire."

"It would be the act of a dictator. It would be un-American. It would be an attempt by the president to further foment dissension in our country rather than bringing people

together,” Markey said.

U.S. Rep. Ayanna Pressley described Trump’s intention to deploy the military to U.S. cities as “callous” and “disconnected.” The Massachusetts Democrat said the president could have opened a dialogue with protestors to find out their needs.

“But instead, he perpetuated the violence,” she said Tuesday at an event in front of the State House. “How do you have people in the streets peacefully protesting and demonstrating against excessive force and the militarization of our police force, and then you want to bring in tanks. It’s nothing short of fascism.”

Also after the debate on a Zoom call with reporters, Kennedy was asked whether Gov. Charlie Baker was right to call in the National Guard on Sunday night to help Boston police control the protests that had started peacefully, but had spiraled into violence and vandalism.

“The governor has to make sure that people are going to be protected here,” Kennedy said. “What we also have to recognize is what is taking place in cities around the country, including in Boston, is a scream of anguish and desire for recognition.”

“Drafting a military response to crush that anguish is not going to be successful,” Kennedy finished.

Gov. Baker has not made a public appearance since Trump’s Rose Garden remarks, but offered up harsh criticism of the president earlier in the day Monday after Trump told governors on a conference call that many of them were “weak” and needed to “dominate” the protesters.

Baker did not join that call.

“I know I should be surprised when I hear incendiary words

like this from him, but I'm not," Baker said. "Like so many times during these past several weeks when the country needed compassion and leadership the most, it was simply nowhere to be found. Instead, we got bitterness, combativeness and self-interest."

Baker said he called in the National Guard to help get control of the protesting only in cooperation with city officials.

Healey condemned the alleged murder of Floyd, and said Americans must acknowledge "400 years of racism and oppression" that Black and brown people have faced. She said the heightened awareness created by widespread demonstrations should be used as an opportunity to build a new system "in ways that rid us of the institutionalized racism that's led to America burning today."

"Yes, America is burning, but that's how forests grow," Healey said.

MassGOP Chairman Jim Lyons, who has condemned both the protesters and what he has called the murder of Floyd, accused Healey of cheering on "rioters" and having "total disregard" for victims of the violent demonstrations.

"Massachusetts, this is your Democratic Party," Lyons Tweeted.