

July 20, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader McConnell, Leader McCarthy and Leader Schumer:

We write to express our deep concern and objection to the use of federal forces in our cities. These forces are conducting crowd control on city streets and detaining individuals. Their threats and actions have as escalated events, and increased the risk of violence against both civilians and local law enforcement officers. These actions also jeopardize the many important ways federal and local law enforcement must work together to protect our cities and country. We urge you to immediately investigate the President and his administration's actions.

The unilateral deployment of these forces into American cities is unprecedented and violates fundamental constitutional protections and tenets of federalism. As you are well aware, President Trump threatened to deploy federal forces in Seattle to "clear out" a protest area and in Chicago to "clean up" the city. Seattle and Chicago authorities objected and threatened legal action to stop such actions. In Washington, DC outside Lafayette Park, extreme action was taken by federal law enforcement against protesters without the Mayor of DC's approval.

Now the administration has deployed federal forces to Portland despite the objections of local and state officials. This includes, but is not limited to, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, a newly launched U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) unit, U.S. Marshals Service, Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers, and DHS's Federal Protective Service. None of these agents are trained in modern urban community policing, such as de-escalation. They are operating without coordination with local law enforcement, and their actions have escalated events, leading to more violence and unrest. Importantly, in Portland they do not even appear to be complying with a federal court order regarding the use of tear gas and other crowd control tools.

The administration's deployment of federal forces shows a shocking disregard for the legitimate use of our U.S. military and federal resources, as well as the authority of local law enforcement. We are a nation of laws and fundamental constitutional guarantees.

The murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis sparked a national uprising and reckoning. Millions have joined protests and exercised their constitutional rights. The majority of the protests have been peaceful and are aimed at improving our communities. Even in circumstances where this is not the case, it is still a matter for local law enforcement.

The President's decision to unilaterally deploy these paramilitary type forces into our cities mirrors the very tyranny our country has fought against and is wholly inconsistent with our democracy.

Cities across America are battling unprecedented challenges: the continued threat of COVID-19, economic devastation, and a new civil rights movement. We need the help of our federal government, and we have urged a range of actions to battle COVID-19, provide relief to our workers, businesses, and cities, and institute more just policing in America. But the President and his administration have demonstrated little interest in engaging with our communities in meaningful ways to address these challenges. Instead, he is politicizing conflict, creating an environment of fear and mistrust, and raising the prospect of more deployments of federal forces in cities like Seattle, Chicago, and other American communities. This abuse of power cannot continue.

The American people have a right to understand the circumstances under which federal action has been authorized and taken in American cities. We urge you to investigate these actions immediately.

Respectfully,

Jenny A. Durkan
Mayor of Seattle, WA

Keisha Lance Bottoms
Mayor of Atlanta, GA

Lori Lightfoot
Mayor of Chicago, IL

Muriel Bowser
Mayor of Washington, DC

Quinton D. Lucas
Mayor of Kansas City, MO

Ted Wheeler
Mayor of Portland, OR