

I trust our Department of Justice with this, and I am glad we have a President who has made this a top priority—making sure the families of those 241 victims who were killed in Beirut receive this money as opposed to having the money go back.

PROTESTS

Mr. President, in responding to a couple of things that were said a few minutes ago, we all know this is a really trying time for our Nation. I begin with the obvious, which is what happened to George Floyd was a crime. It was a horrible crime, and it has caused a groundswell of people joining together and standing against injustice and hate, not just for George Floyd but for so many others.

Protests are meaningful and positive events—standing up for dignity and respect for all people. Protesting is a cherished part of our democratic society that is enshrined in the First Amendment. The rights of peaceful protest should be supported and celebrated, period. We understand that. Yet those protests are not the same as the dangerous, destructive activity we have seen in many of our cities just in the last couple of days. Emotions are high, and tensions are high, which is understandable. We need law and order if we are going to move forward, and I think every reasonable person agrees with that.

We are trying to have tough conversations about inequality, but we are facing a lot of misinformation, especially when it comes to our military. If we let this misinformation spread, it will just make things worse. All of the people out there—I am talking about the “hate Trump” people—are using this to try to lie to the American people. So I would like to correct the record, and I hope every American here understands and believes these words. This is very important. Here is what is happening.

Right now, the National Guard has not been federalized for response. Right now, Active-Duty troops have not been sent into any city, including DC. I was here last night. I was visibly looking around and making sure that this was not the case, and it was not. There were no Active-Duty troops in spite of things you have heard to the contrary.

Right now, local and State law enforcement are being supported by the National Guard but only when they are requested by their States. The Department of Defense believes that, and by and large, they are doing a fine job. I agree with that. Our military is prepared to step in if the situation deteriorates dramatically and only if our President finds he has to step in. To be crystal clear, the President hasn’t done that yet.

I ask my fellow Americans to slow down and understand what will happen if and only if the President does so. It doesn’t mean that our streets will immediately be flooded with uniformed and armed troops. There is a process that has to be followed just as it was in

1992 with the LA riots, in 1998 after Hurricane Hugo, and at every other time before that.

First, this is the process. What has to happen is the President must issue a proclamation ordering any insurgents to disperse within a set period of time. Now, that is really important because that is the warning shot. He says this is going to happen, but only you can keep this from happening. The President has to issue the proclamation ordering any insurgents to disperse within a set period of time. It will mean that our Nation’s military and security leaders, including our Commander in Chief—the President—will have determined that the situation will have deteriorated in a way that local officials will not have managed on their own. In virtually every case, local officials have agreed with that.

We are not there now. We are not there at all, and I hope we don’t get there. This will only be as a last resort. If we do, I am confident this decision will be made with the advice of the top civilian and military officials who have all been confirmed with wide bipartisan support and margins.

GENERAL MARK A. MILLEY

Mr. President, I would like to say a little something about simple military relations. This is something I care a lot about as chairman of the Senate Committee on Armed Services. In particular, I want to speak about General Milley.

General Milley is the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In this job, General Milley is the President’s top military adviser. Don’t forget he doesn’t have any command authority over the military forces. This is important. This is not what you hear people talking about when they misrepresent the situation. This is very important. He is there as the adviser to the President of the United States, and he doesn’t have any command authority. There has been a lot of criticism about his wearing his battle dress uniform—his BDU, as they call it—on Monday when the President spoke. Here is another area in which I want to set the record straight.

General Milley was getting ready to visit with troops around DC—I know that. I was talking to him that day—who were also in their BDUs. That was the dress uniform for their function at that time. Then he was called to the White House. We all know why he was called to the White House. He is the adviser to the President. I think everyone can agree that we want that voice at the table in situations like this to provide the best military advice, as is his statutory authority and responsibility.

On Monday, after General Milley walked outside with the President, he assessed the situation and immediately removed himself. Now, this isn’t just me talking. I know that he did because I was with him shortly before that and also after that. So that was a fact. He also told me that he intended to honor his oath and uphold the delicate bal-

ance between civilians and the military. I fully believe him. He has always done that in the past and always will do that.

The accusations against General Milley are especially troubling to me because I know, from working with him, of his commitment to our Nation, to the Constitution, and to the American people—of keeping them safe and giving his best military advice. It is striking below the belt to make these accusations and to try to scare the American people. It is my duty as chairman of the Committee on Armed Services to have strong oversight over this issue. We have oversight over it. If what they are saying is true, we still have the oversight.

I assure you, right now, we are watching what our military is doing and what it has always done, which is its duty within the law and constitutional limits, and that is exactly what General Milley has done and is doing right now. We are seeing a lot of finger-pointing and blame going around. We owe it to ourselves and our neighbors to believe the very best in each other, not assume the worse. We need to recognize everyone’s inherent value and dignity and treat each other with respect and dignity as Christ calls us to do. Only then can we listen with both of our ears and with our hearts. That is what I am asking the American people to do.

Many of those in the protests are in a group that has been referred to as antifa. Certainly, George Floyd’s death was a tragedy and went beyond unthinkable dimensions, but did any of them know who he was? I suggest, no, they really didn’t. So I would only say this: I think, in answer to the accusations that were made, that I would quote only one or two sentences out of a speech that our President made 2 days ago in the Rose Garden. This is very self-explanatory and does explain the situation in response to the accusations that have been made falsely about him.

We cannot allow the righteous cries and peaceful protesters to be drowned out by an angry mob. 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.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SASSER). The Senator from Tennessee.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, I first thank my friend, Senator LEAHY, for allowing me to speak, for we are all dealing with the Committee on the Judiciary.

I ask unanimous consent that Senator LEAHY be recognized as soon as I finish my brief remarks.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, I want to say just a couple of things to Tennesseans and to Americans.

All are expressing their rage and grief over the murder of George Floyd

in Minnesota. I will tell you that this event of May 25 cannot be written off as a simple use of force or as being unfortunate or regrettable. We all know that, on that day, George Floyd was killed by a police officer while other officers looked on and heard his begging for life and his cries for help. The officers responsible should be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

I offer my prayers and condolences to the Floyd family, just as so many other Members of this Chamber have done, and I support the President's call for the Justice Department to investigate this death.

CENSORSHIP

Mr. President, our country was built on the premise of dissent, and we have seen the power that peaceful protests have in their ability to bring change to every level of government. Unfortunately, over the past week, we have also seen what happens when criminals and shadowy professionals exploit these public expressions of frustration and pain.

Every single day, Americans are waking up to find that their neighborhoods have been destroyed, and they watch news reports that are dominated by lawlessness. Many activists and members of the mainstream media have attempted to force us into choosing between solidarity and maintaining law and order. This is a false choice. It is one that we ought to reject. Instead, we should fight for accountability, compassion, and understanding. At the same time, we must condemn racism, hatred, and the violence that has torn apart so many neighborhoods this very week.

We should also celebrate and defend our right to peaceful disagreement in the streets, in the classroom, and online just as well as in this very Chamber. Unfortunately, too often, this right is not celebrated. Over the years, we have documented Big Tech's history of censorship, particularly the censorship of dissenting conservative voices. During the 2018 election cycle, a series of pro-life ads that I sponsored on social media were taken down for having content the platform labeled as "inflammatory."

For years, conservatives have been fighting a losing war against content moderation policies that act as a dragnet for dissenting opinions. Last week, Twitter rolled out a new "fact-checking" feature and almost immediately botched a fact check on one of President Trump's tweets. Unfortunately, for Twitter, the President was not afraid to point out how easy it is for private companies to make mistakes that turn moderation into speech policing. We know that social media companies have subjectively manipulated their algorithms to capture conservative opinions and conservative elected officials. They have been doing this for too long for it to just be a mere mistake. These are not unintended consequences.

Last week, President Trump signed an Executive order to bring some much

needed attention to the issue, and we thank him for that. As head of the Judiciary Committee's Tech Task Force, I look forward to working with the White House and the Justice Department to preserve free speech online for all Americans.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

PROTESTS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, we know that America is hurting. It is reeling from a deadly pandemic that has taken more than 100,000 lives and then from witnessing the broad daylight murder—murder—of yet another Black man by an officer of the law. It seethes with rage and sorrow about the racial injustices that still plague our society. America is suffering from unprecedented political divisions that are routinely worsened and deepened by a President whose every utterance only tears us further apart. In my decades in the U.S. Senate, I have never seen our country so in need of healing.

I was a prosecutor. So, when I first saw the video of George Floyd's murder—a human being who was pinned down by the neck, cried "I can't breathe," and desperately called out for his mother—I was shocked to my core. For millions of Americans and for me, that shock swiftly turned into anger.

How could a police officer, who has sworn an oath to protect and serve, so casually take a human being's life? Why did his fellow officers who witnessed the murder that we all witnessed on video stand there and do nothing to stop it? How could this happen in plain sight when multiple onlookers begged the officer to relent—stop his murderous conduct—as George fell unconscious?

I was left sickened and shaken.

I do not know and did not know George Floyd, but imagine if he were your neighbor or your friend. Imagine if George Floyd were your brother, your son, your husband, or your grandchild. Imagine if George Floyd simply looked like your loved one and shared the same skin color. Imagine the concern you would have for such a person who lived in constant fear of those who are responsible to protect us all. So it is no surprise that protests swept our Nation in the wake of this murder.

Communities of color and all those who sympathize with them are fed up. They are sick and tired of the fact that African Americans are nearly 2½ times as likely as White Americans to be killed by police officers. No one of good conscience can sit idly by while African-American lives are treated with less worth. Our country long ago promised equal rights and equal justice.

Now protesters are aching for real accountability for officers of the law who engage in lawless violence. It is not simply justice for George Floyd; it is justice for Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Tamir Rice. The list goes on and on, which is why the protests go on and on.

Too often, people feel the police officers who take Black lives are treated like they are above the law. They feel the justice system has been fueled by a culture of impunity that shields the same officers who abuse the public's trust. Too often the accountability comes after incontrovertible evidence, such as a damning video, happens to surface and the public demands justice.

I can say, as one who served proudly in law enforcement and has served proudly in the Senate, ultimately accountability will require dismantling this culture of impunity, as well as ensuring that law enforcement agencies have training and policies in place to serve to rebuild trust in communities of color.

The protesters demand more from our justice system. They demand more from a nation that promises that nobody is above the law. Well, I stand with them, and Congress has to, too. None of us condone, and indeed I have strongly condemned, the looting and violence that has sadly taken place alongside the peaceful protests and the extremists and opportunists who have co-opted the peaceful process. They are not serving justice. They are not going to bring the change our country so badly needs.

My hero, a dear friend who has called me his brother, Representative JOHN LEWIS, said just a few days ago:

[L]ooting and burning is not the way. Organize. Demonstrate. Sit-in. Stand-up. Vote. Be constructive, not destructive.

I hope everybody will listen to what Representative LEWIS said. I hope our fellow Americans will heed his wise words. I refuse to partake in efforts seeking to delegitimize all protesters and create even more distrust and division. Demonstrators demanding accountability are not thugs, as President Trump has called them. No one should threaten state-sanctioned violence against protesters, as this President and some of his allies have. I strongly oppose any efforts to invoke the Insurrection Act to unleash our military against these domestic demonstrations, as President Trump has absurdly threatened.

Our military is one of our Nation's most sacred institutions. It serves to safeguard our constitutional rights against enemies abroad. They should never be ordered to American streets as the battlefield, which would only incite further chaos and deprive Americans of their right to peacefully assemble. That is not the America we know and love. It is not the America I know and love.

Unfortunately, President Trump has proven that he is incapable or perhaps he is uninterested in healing and uniting our Nation. At every turn his instinct is to divide and escalate. During every crisis he manages to manufacture another of his own making. When Americans are in desperate need of a consoler in chief, a role that I have seen every past President play during my years in the Senate—every one of