Chicago Mayor Lightfoot announces police crackdown

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In a press conference Friday, Democratic Mayor Lori Lightfoot announced a plan to tighten police control of the city, increase surveillance and further limit access to the downtown. One thousand police officers are being deployed into downtown Friday evening.

Lightfoot's plan represents a new stage in the class war in which the Democratic Party is using the looting as pretext for a massive buildup of the police apparatus.

"Whether it's in our downtown commercial district or in one of our other 77 neighborhoods, there can never be any place in Chicago where businesses are afraid to open, where residents and visitors are afraid to travel and shop," Lightfoot said during a noon hour press conference.

Police will use "every legal tactic necessary to protect retail throughout the city" Police Superintendent David Brown said, including "enhanced tactics" like disabling vehicles by puncturing tires and setting up roadblocks. The city also announced the purchase of 500 more body cameras for police officers.

Last month, Lightfoot entered into an agreement with the Trump administration to send a "surge" of 200 federal agents to Chicago, allegedly to fight crime. Officers have also been put on 12 hour shifts with no days off until further notice.

A 20-person task force has been created in the Chicago Police Department (CPD) to monitor social media discussions about organized gatherings. An FBI joint task force has been established to locate and prosecute alleged looters.

The plan reportedly includes creating a "new hardened city landscape," including concrete barriers to movement. A division of labor is established between the mayor's office, CPD, Cook County Sheriff and Illinois State Police, operationalizing quick deployment of police. State police will be deployed to shut down access to certain areas of Chicago and county sheriffs will go to neighborhoods for "violence reduction."

The American Civil Liberties Union is suing the city for information on how social media is monitored.

Bridge and train access into the wealthy downtown area and its commercial corridors will continue to be restricted through the weekend. Since Monday morning , the bridges into the Loop have remained up, expressway exits blocked and train access to downtown stations restricted, turning the central business district into a virtual gated community for the ruling elite. This has increased the burden on overnight workers and those who rely on public transportation.

Last Sunday, a CPD officer shot 20-year-old Latrell Allen in the Englewood neighborhood, who, police claim, fled after being stopped and then fired on officers. A confrontation at the site of the shooting ensued with more than 100 CPD officers facing off with residents. The officers that shot Latrell Allen last Sunday were not wearing body cameras.

Later that night, hundreds of people flooded the downtown area breaking into several high-end retailers. Four hundred police officers were deployed in response and Illinois state police blocked off ramps from expressways and the bridges across the Chicago River were raised, except for the one on LaSalle Street for police and emergency vehicles. Over 100 were arrested and 43 have reportedly been charged with felonies.

Further looting took place Monday in the West Side neighborhood of West Garfield Park after which police shut down a square mile of a commercial district. To *Block Club Chicago*, Chris Patterson of the Institute for Nonviolence Chicago said of the looters: "They got no job, they got no money. They're gonna get in trouble because they have nothing else to live for, so what they got to lose? They need to put more money into helping

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people get jobs. Then it wouldn't be like this."

Representatives of business organizations and real estate interests, including the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce, Retail Merchants Association and Sudler Property Management have issued public statements demanding Lightfoot crack down on crime and improve the perception of safety for wealthy residents. Aldermen Hopkins publicly criticized CPD for its slow and insufficiently brutal response.

Cook County State's Attorney Kim Foxx issued a statement referring to "extraordinary times" and stating her intention to prosecute aggressively after being publicly criticized last week by Lightfoot and officials.

A *Sun Times* report declared the city "at a crossroads" warning that corporate headquarters, which receive millions in tax subsidies, may flee because they no longer feel safe. United Airlines announced it would be temporarily moving its command center staff to a suburban location. A recent *Crain's* editorial board statement declared the city is threatened with economic collapse.

It is not only, or even primarily, in response to looting that the city's ruling elite are demanding a crackdown that Democratic city leaders are moving aggressively to implement. There is widespread social anger over the inequality and relentless police violence in the Chicago area, which is home to more than 15 billionaires.

Protests against police violence and police presence in schools have continued from May after the murder of George Floyd, into recent days after the shooting of Allen. This week, high school students marched to demand cops be removed from their schools.

The explosive social conditions in Chicago are the result of a four-decade-long class war overseen by the Democratic Party. Working class neighborhoods have been reduced to poverty and destitution by the shutdown of factories and decades of budget cuts, which led to the closure of public schools, recreation centers, public housing buildings and health clinics.

The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically worsened every indicator of social misery. Tens of thousands are out of work, while others are forced to labor for profit in unsafe workplaces according to the bipartisan policy of "herd immunity" pursued in reopening the economy. Opposition to the opening of schools is mounting, and where school is to be online for some weeks, there is no plan to allow working families to stay at home in order to supervise the children learning remotely. In Chicago, as in every American city, working and lower middle class families are facing impossible conditions. While the ruling Democrats claim there is no money for health, social, education and social services, there are endless resources available for state repression.

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