Trump repeats threats of post-election military repression as Barr calls for charging protesters with “sedition”

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Speaking at a White House press briefing Wednesday evening, President Trump reiterated his threats to call out the military and suppress election night demonstrations that might be provoked by a claim on his part to have won reelection.

A reporter cited Attorney General William Barr’s statement that he wanted to charge anti-Trump demonstrators with sedition and Trump’s own previous comments about invoking the Insurrection Act, then asked him, “Why do you want to use that rhetoric?”

Trump replied, “The question was asked to me if you have violent demonstrations. Yes, we will put it down quickly if there is. And I think the American public wants to see that.”

He continued, “Look, if there’s any kind of demonstration or violence, there will be nothing that interferes with this product, this vote. There’s going to be nothing.”

The question about Barr was based on a report by the *Wall Street Journal* that the attorney general had told federal prosecutors in a conference call last week that they should bring federal charges of insurrection against those who were arrested for violent actions during the wave of mass protests against police violence triggered by the May 25 police murder of George Floyd.

According to this report, Barr went further, suggesting that some way be found to bring criminal charges against Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan, a Democrat, because she did not immediately suppress a police-free protest zone in the city’s downtown for several weeks in June.

After effectively endorsing Barr’s actions, Trump then launched into a lengthy diatribe against mail ballots, attempting, as he has on several other occasions, to distinguish between voting by absentee ballot, which he acknowledged doing regularly himself, and voting based on a mail-in system where state governments send ballots out widely to all registered voters.

There is no difference in practice between absentee ballots and mail-in ballots, because in both cases state governments check the returned ballots against signatures on file. Trump falsely claimed that Democratic-controlled states were dropping the signature checking in order to manufacture large numbers of illegal votes against him.

He has repeatedly claimed in recent days that the only way he can lose the election is due to vote-rigging. Wednesday’s remarks on mail-in voting were his most detailed and inflammatory comments on this issue. He claimed, “Our biggest threat to this election is governors from opposing parties controlling ballots, millions of ballots.”

He continued, presenting an apocalyptic picture of the conduct of the November 3 election, “The ballots will be stolen. Who knows where they’re going? Who knows where they’re coming from? It’s not just the counting of the ballots, which by the way, which will take forever.”

The most remarkable aspect of Trump’s 30-minute appearance is how easily the media let him avoid discussing the brazen threats of violence made by his own supporters. Only an hour before Trump took the podium in the White House press room, the top communications official in the Department of Health and Human Services, Michael Caputo, revealed he was taking a 60-day leave of absence, while his top

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assistant, Paul Alexander, would leave the agency permanently.

Caputo had posted Sunday night a fascistic tirade on Facebook in which he accused scientists at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention of engaging in "sedition" against Trump. He also denounced supposed plans for a left-wing insurrection against Trump's reelection, urged right-wing Trump supporters to stockpile ammunition for inauguration day, and called on his supporters to contact and join the New York Watchmen.

Alexander came under heavy criticism last week when it was revealed that he had played a major role in censoring or doctoring CDC statements about the coronavirus in order to put Trump's handling of the pandemic in a better political light.

But aside from a passing reference by Trump to Caputo's taking a leave of absence—which would take him out of the political spotlight until after the election—there was no discussion at the press briefing of the incitements to violence by various Trump aides and supporters.

This includes the remarks by longtime political crony Roger Stone, who told the fascist broadcaster Alex Jones last week that Trump should declare martial law after the election and carry out a general roundup of his political enemies, including "the Clintons," as well as the CEOs of major Silicon Valley companies. No reporter Wednesday even mentioned Stone's name.

While Trump and his political aides and advisers openly speak of civil war, martial law and armed attacks on their political opponents, the Democrats are largely ignoring and covering up the appeals for fascistic violence. Congressional Democrats have called for the ouster of Michael Caputo and his boss, Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex Azar, but they have said nothing about the threats of postelection violence.

Asked during a campaign swing Tuesday in Florida about the comments by Stone, Caputo and Trump himself, Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden said in an interview with Telemundo, "What is worrying is the way he talks about 'insurrection' and people taking up arms. Have you ever heard a Democratic president of the United States speak like this?"

In subsequent comments, Biden bizarrely compared Trump to Fidel Castro as a would-be authoritarian ruler, in an effort to appeal to fascistic anti-Castro Cuban sentiment in south Florida, where Cuban Americans are the largest group of Hispanic voters.

The Biden campaign's Spanish-language advertising in Florida has struck an openly anticommunist note, portraying Trump as "soft" on Russia's Vladimir Putin, China's Xi Jinping and Nicolas Maduro of Venezuela, in an effort to peel off traditionally Republican voters among Cuban Americans and Venezuelan Americans.

Biden's events in Florida also included an appearance before a group of veterans at Hillsborough County Community College in the Tampa area, where he attacked Trump for his reported slurs against soldiers killed or captured in US wars in the Middle East as "suckers" and "losers."

It was Biden's first visit to the crucial "battleground" state since 2019. Besides appealing to the military and Cuban American vote, the former vice president is banking on the support of billionaire Michael Bloomberg, who last week pledged to spend $100 million just in the Florida media markets in an effort to deliver the state and its 29 electoral votes to the Democratic ticket.

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