

# As police riot against protesters and journalists, Democratic governors activate thousands of National Guard soldiers to quell protests

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In response to protests against unending police violence and in anticipation of a verdict in the Derek Chauvin trial in the coming days, Democratic governors and mayors across the country are preemptively declaring emergency protocols at police departments and activating National Guard soldiers in an attempt to intimidate protesters and deprive them of their First Amendment rights.

In Minneapolis and the surrounding suburbs of Champlin and Brooklyn Center, where 20-year-old Daunte Wright was shot and killed by 26-year police veteran Kimberly Potter, after she allegedly mistook her pistol for a Taser last Sunday, more than 3,000 National Guard troops and at least 1,100 law enforcement agents from agencies across the state have been activated as part of the misnamed “Operation Safety Net.”

Far from protecting workers and youth, “Operation Safety Net” has led to the injury and arrest of hundreds, many of whom had nothing to do with the protest. While Capitol Police on the front lines of the attack on Congress on January 6 were prohibited from utilizing their most effective crowd control munitions such as sting ball grenades or less-lethal impact munitions, working class parents and their families in Brooklyn Center have been suffering the effects of CS gas and flashbangs throughout the past week.

“We have been sneezing and coughing every day, because it comes through the walls and then it stays in the walls,” Iranesha Anderson, 29, told the *Washington Post*. Anderson has four children, two of whom have asthma. “You can’t even air out your apartment, because the [expletive] still keeps coming in.”

In addition to flooding working class neighborhoods with tear gas, militarized police and soldiers, an unconstitutional curfew has been in effect for the last week in Champlin and Brooklyn Center, preventing many residents from going about their day. Disturbing images and videos over the

weekend revealed scenes of militarized police backed by soldiers, pointing semi-automatic rifles at unarmed women attempting to pump gas who were allegedly in violation of the curfew.

Demonstrating the immense fear within the ruling class and the state that the protests, similar to last summer’s, might grow to encompass broad layers of workers and youth and spiral out of their control, state agents have been deliberately targeting journalists to prevent the distribution and documentation of on-the-ground footage of the occupation.

During Friday evening’s protest in Brooklyn Center, during which police boasted of 136 arrests, multiple journalists reported being assaulted by police while taking photographs or simply standing on the sidewalk. Freelance photographer Tim Evans told the Associated Press that he witnessed police charge into a crowd of peaceful protesters and begin pepper-spraying and tackling people, with one officer punching Evans in the face before ripping off his press credentials and forcing him to lie on his stomach with a knee in his back.

“I was yelling ‘press.’ He said he didn’t care and to shut the f\*ck up,” Evans told the AP. Evans said another officer came over and smashed his head into the ground and then zip-tied his hands behind his back.

“I’m extremely upset,” Evans said. “I felt like they were targeting the press in general. I’m out there doing what I’m doing because I have such strong convictions about the importance of this work.” Evans added that without his protective equipment, such as goggles, respiratory mask and helmet, he would have been seriously injured.

“It’s egregious, it’s horrific,” he said. “We are nothing as a society, as a democracy, without a free press and it’s constantly being challenged and constantly being abused.”

A video journalist documenting the protests for the

*Minneapolis Star-Tribune*, Mark Vancleave, reported on Twitter that after being shot in the hand with a “less-lethal” round by police while holding his camera to his face on Monday, he won’t be able to pick up a camera for “at least six weeks” following surgery to repair his broken ring finger.

Vancleave said he is recovering, but remains “deeply concerned for my fellow journalists working to fairly and accurately report on the crisis unfolding in our communities—particularly as Minnesota law enforcement continues to target journalists with force and disregard [their] constitutionally protected role.”

Maribel Perez Wadsworth, president of USA TODAY Network and publisher of *USA Today*, issued a statement following the police riot Friday night condemning the actions of the police in Brooklyn Center.

“We condemn the actions of the police in Brooklyn Center in the strongest possible terms,” Wadsworth said. “Requiring journalists to lie prone on the ground and photographing their credentials are purposeful intimidation tactics. To be clear, we will not be intimidated or deterred in fulfilling our First Amendment right and responsibility to hold power to account in our reporting.”

The rampant abuse of journalists prompted Democratic Governor Tim Walz to issue a statement on Twitter Saturday in which he claimed to be looking for “a better path forward to protect the journalists covering civil unrest.”

On Thursday, Walz defended the fortifying of the Brooklyn Center police station with concrete barricades and the brutal violence police meted out to journalists and protesters alike.

“What do you think would have happened Sunday night or Monday night, especially had there not been a fence there and had there been no one there? I’ve learned from the past that the building would have been burned down and my fear was that the surrounding apartments would have burned, too.”

In addition to fortifying the police station, the home of former officer Potter has been fortified with concrete barriers and steel fencing. A 24-hour surveillance system has also been installed, with police providing round-the-clock protection as well.

Testifying to the anger and tension the ongoing occupation is causing in the community, early Sunday morning it was reported that members of the Minnesota National Guard and Minneapolis Police Department were fired upon in an alleged drive-by shooting.

According to the Minneapolis Police Department, at about 4:19 a.m., someone in a light-colored SUV fired multiple shots at the soldiers and police, who were patrolling in North Minneapolis. No one was shot or seriously injured. One

soldier was taken to the hospital to receive care for injuries suffered from shattered glass.

In Washington D.C., Fox 5 confirmed that Democratic Mayor Muriel Bowser has already requested 300 Guard members, who remain on standby at the D.C. armory should police request support.

On Friday, local media obtained an internal email from the Metropolitan Police Department confirming that the entire department will be activated on an “all hands on deck” mode beginning April 19.

In Pennsylvania, Democratic Governor Tom Wolf declared a “proclamation of disaster emergency” on Friday. The proclamation carried with it an activation order for over 1,000 National Guardsmen to be deployed in Philadelphia. Troops could be seen arriving in Philadelphia throughout the weekend.

In a statement, Wolf said the declaration was part of “preemptive steps” the government was taking in order to “ensure the safety of our fellow Pennsylvanians.” The proclamation is effective for 90 days, unless rescinded or extended by Wolf.

During a Friday press conference, Wolf and police heads defended the deployment of extra police and Guard soldiers saying they had “learned” from last summer’s protests following the murder of George Floyd and have developed a “holistic plan” to counter protests.

“Regardless of what may develop, I am confident that our department is prepared for whatever may come our way,” Police Commissioner Danielle Outlaw said on Friday. Outlaw admitted that “missteps” were made during protests last summer, but vowed that her department would not hesitate to use “less-lethal munitions” but that they would not be used “against peaceful demonstrators.”

Describing the militarized atmosphere in the city, Outlaw said: “Things might look different in your neighborhoods over the coming days. You will see officers on bikes, and some officers on foot. Some officers may be on horseback ... there’s even a chance that you will see a Pennsylvania National Guard soldier in your neighborhood. Please remember that they are all here to serve you.”



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