

CNN's *Inside Politics with Dana Bash*

08/11/25

12:00:30 p.m.

16 minutes and 22 seconds

DANA BASH: I'm Dana Bash in Washington, D.C., and we are following pretty big breaking news. A remarkable moment in the United States of America. You see, the President of the United States there who just wrapped up a press conference announcing his plans to take over law enforcement here, where we are in the district of Columbia. He's putting Washington, D.C., police under federal control, deploying nearly a thousand National Guard troops to the capital's streets, and pushing to end no cash bail, warning he will bring in active duty military if needed. Now, all of this is under a claim — claim that there is a drastic measure — a series of them — needed because of crime in Washington, D.C. Listen to what he said.

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: I'm announcing a historic action to rescue our nation's capital from crime, bloodshed, bedlam and squalor, and worse. [SCREEN WIPE] Our capital city has been overtaken by violent gangs and bloodthirsty criminals, roving mobs of wild youth, drugged out maniacs, and homeless people and we're not going to let it happen anymore. We're not going to take it.

BASH: That is a major exaggeration, and we're going to fact check all of the President's comments with Daniel Dale in just a moment, but first, I want to introduce our terrific reporters here at the table. [INTRODUCES PANEL] David, I want you to talk from a lot of angles, obviously, number one is a reporter and the moment that this is, but also as a D.C. resident, like I am, I mean, you have the floor.

DAVID CHALIAN: Well, I — when I see this and I understand the moment that we're covering here and that Donald Trump is escalating this. My first question as a reporter is, why is this issue? And again, you're going to get into the fact check of what is wrong about his figures or not. But why is this the top of the President of the United States agenda today? And — and I think that's an important question for us to think about as we think about everything that's on his plate. Why is taking over law enforcement in the district of Columbia? Now, he made the argument as to why and that it's a capital city, and that the way he sees it is that it is crime ridden and needs to be changed. But still, why is the President of the United States putting that front and center. That's a question I sort of try to think about as we put this into perspective. But then, Dana, as you were noting, yes, this is a dramatic moment, but it also feels to me like dipping into a, well that President Trump has gone to time and time again in the first term and this term. The — the tactics here may be more amped up and dramatic, but the — the going after this city or other cities as sort of crime ridden, this is — this was the heart of many of the campaigns and political agenda —

BASH: Sure.

CHALIAN: — that — that Trump puts before voters. And so to me, I see him dipping back into a well of something he feels is a strong suit and where he thinks he has stronger footing the way

he does with immigration or border security. Which to me also then begs the question, well, what is he a little nervous about over here if he needs to dip into this well right now on this topic?

BASH: Yeah. And we're going to get back and talk a lot more about it. Dipping into a well, no question, we've seen that happen many, many times. And this is a — a familiar well to — to keep going with your metaphor. But then there's also maybe laying the groundwork for something else. And that's what I want to turn to our senior White House correspondent, Kristen Holmes, about. Kristen, you were at that briefing. This has been something you were on the campaign trail nonstop with Donald Trump during a 2024. It's something he talked about crime in cities constantly, including and especially this one in Washington, D.C. But militarizing United States cities, starting with the District of Columbia, frankly, because it's just easier because of the home rule law. What should we be thinking about? And what are you hearing from your sources and that building behind you?

KRISTEN HOLMES: Yeah. I mean, I think that we should look at this as a larger picture, as you're mentioning. I mean, he even talked about New York, Chicago, trying this out in DC, and then he might go to other large cities, talking about crime in those cities. As you mentioned, this is something he talked about a lot on the campaign trail in terms of using federal law enforcement in cities. But we also want to mention that at various times, he's walked back this idea of federalizing the law enforcement, putting National Guard into cities. And, in fact, I was spoken to a number of people in the D.C. government who said that they were surprised by this announcement, particularly given that the relationship seemed to be on okay terms between Mayor Muriel Bowser and President Trump. She has been in the Oval Office with him. She has had meetings with him. Their teams are almost in constant touch, although it does seem as though this was something that might have blindsided them. Clearly here, he is ramping up the rhetoric around this, and two of the things that he said, in addition to obviously saying that the Metropolitan Police Department is going to be under federal law and deploying the National Guard, he said he might deploy active duty military to address crime. He also said that more service members might be going in as guardsmen. All of this to amplify the federal response. And I will tell you, Dana, I mean, one kind of strange part of all of this is that when we sat down in the briefing, they gave us a packet of information to show us some of the arrests that were made over the weekend as this starting to ramp up or increase in federal law enforcement took place, and they were fairly low-level criminals. It was somebody with possession or a DUI at one point, and there were only five of them, I believe, listed in this packet, so — so it's unclear. You know, he's talking about this major escalation in violent crime, but that is not quite clear from the packet of information that he gave us here. And of course, I know you're going to have someone fact check the actual numbers coming out of D.C. and the Department of Justice, but he has clearly had some sort of an escalation when it comes to this. Just over the last three days. And I was told it was all he talked about all day Saturday where the outrageous crime numbers and how they were going to bring in more federal law enforcement.

BASH: All right, Kristen, thank you so much for that. And we are going to now do a deep dive into the fact check claiming that Washington, D.C. is getting worse. I want to bring in the one and only Daniel Dale. Daniel?

DANIEL DALE: There was a lot of deception from the President there. So here's a reality check. There is no doubt that D.C. has for decades been a high-crime city. It is among the U.S. cities with the highest homicide rates, though there are a bunch of other big cities that are worse and D.C. did indeed have a big crime spike in 2023, which is the year the President kept citing. But contrary to what the President said today, even in 2023, D.C. did not have an all-time high in murder. It was way worse during the crack crisis of the 80s and early 90s, and more pressingly Dana, the President was just flat wrong when he said, it's getting worse now, not getting better. Crime in D.C., including murder, has fallen sharply since that 2023 spike. It fell in 2024. It's fallen further in 2025. So, let's look at some of this data. In 2023, D.C. had its most murders in more than two decades, 274. Of course, that's terrible. But it then plunged to 187 murders last year, and it's been falling again so far this year. Through July, according to figures compiled by crime data expert Jeff Asher, D.C. had 34 percent fewer murders than it did through the same period in that year, 2023. Now, how about violent crime more broadly? Well, that's also down sharply in the last year and a half. In fact, per Jeff Asher, DC's officially reported violent crime rate in 2024 was the second lowest since 1966, so lower than every year of Trump's first administration. It's about a third of what it was in those bad old days, the early 1990s. And you heard from the President and his team about carjackings. Well, indeed, a problem in D.C., but what are the numbers? Say again, a big spike in 2023 down since Asher noted the 16 carjackings reported in July were the fewest reported in any month in more than five years in D.C., down more than 87 percent from the same month in 2023. So look, we know crime is an issue in D.C. We've lived there. We know that every violent crime is a shame, a tragedy. Of course, not excusing any of them. But this isn't an ongoing crime spike like President Trump suggested. And he said it's rising. Even in the text of the executive order. I went through it. The first section says crime is rising in the capital. That is just not true.

BASH: Daniel, thank you so much. Really appreciate you bringing all of that to us. Really important fact checks. And back here at the table. Look, I'm not here to say that as Daniel just showed what the actual facts and data that crime is not an issue in this city or other cities across the country. The question is about scope and about the context in which crime is happening now versus what we've seen in the past versus also the difference between now and the past, which is that you have a President who feels emboldened to use the National Guard and perhaps more active duty military on the streets of this country.

ALAYNA TREENE: Yeah. And I think the question what you brought up, David, is such an important one. Why is this happening now? I mean, this is a remarkable move by the President to federalize the D.C. Police to bring in the National Guard, to say that he would potentially bring in active duty military. And I do think, look, this is clearly an issue that the President has. It has bothered him for some time throughout his term in office just the last couple of months. He hates driving through D.C. When I was talking to White House officials, they say because he's been whenever he takes his motorcade and he sees a homeless tent or something like that, it infuriates him further. And yes, he is someone who, you know, by and large, wants to paint himself as a law and order President. He also repeatedly this year has gone farther than in his first term and testing the boundaries of his executive authority. And so, we're kind of seeing that all come together. The question is why now? And it's one we don't really have an answer for. And to see him standing up there and taking questions for the better part over an hour really on this is

remarkable, but it's still unclear why he's choosing this moment to move forward with this.

EVA MCKEND: I would say, though, that although it is a dramatic step, this is tethered to how he has always felt about American cities. He has always felt that American cities, especially those with large black populations like Washington, D.C., are crime ridden and run by incompetent leadership, as he repeated today. But this comes with a tremendous amount of risk. Historically, when we have seen other police be federalized, it has led in this country, in some instances to extreme acts of violence. And so, whatever happens in the days ahead, President Trump will ultimately have to own that. And then I'll say this. You know, Mayor Bowser, she really capitulated to President Trump. What did that ultimately get her? I think the Democrats more broadly are trying to figure out how to navigate Trump, how to work around him or with him in this moment. And it seemed like ultimately, this display from him today was a spit in her face.

BASH: And — and listen, I mean, when we I mentioned this at the beginning, but we should give our viewers a little bit more information about why it is so easy for him to deal with D.C. versus other cities, because D.C. is not part of the state. Everybody knows that. And here's what the Home Rule Act of 1973 does. It allows Presidents to take control of D.C. Police for 48 hours if he determines that special conditions of an emergency nature exist. 48-hour period can be extended if he notifies relevant congressional committees and then taking control for more than 30 days must be passed into law.

ELI STOKOLS: Yeah. I mean, there's a opportunistic aspect to this that, you know, as we said, he sees it every day. But he also — the law allows him to do this. Now. It's not the first place he did this. He sent the federal troops into Los Angeles to crack down on protesters who were upset over the immigration raids.

BASH: Over the objection of the governor.

STOKOLS: Right. So, this is not the first time we're seeing this. And to Alayna's point, in the second term, he is not just thinking about it and there's no one there to talk him down, no one there to say, well, we really should think long and hard about doing this. There are a lot of people who are saying, that sounds like a great idea, and they'll stand up there at the press conference with him and they'll pat him on the back and say, thanks to you, this is a great idea, and we're going to get it under control. I mean, you saw the people who are up there, Judge Jeanine, you know, so everybody's on the same page about this. There's nobody trying to restrain any of these impulses in the second term and he's really going for it in a number of different ways. I think, in terms of why now we don't have concrete information, but I think two things that are obvious. One, he mentioned it himself, the attack on the — the DOJ's staffer recent days and the — the fact that this there was a carjacking and this — this person who has some notoriety, at least in D.C. or within the administration, was attacked. He cited that as sort of a pretext for doing this broader, more dramatic thing and there was also a question at the end about the Epstein case and the press conference, which went on for a long time. It ended pretty quickly after that subject was brought up. So is this another attempt to change the subject? We don't know, but that hypothesis certainly has to be thought about as we consider why now.

BASH: And one of the things that was striking in that very long press conference was something that the FBI director said standing there at the podium with the President as he's making this big, monumental change to law enforcement — federalizing law enforcement in D.C. and saying it's because of rampant crime rates. Listen to what the FBI director said.

FBI DIRECTOR KASH PATEL: And the murder rates are plummeting. We are now able to report that the murder rate is on track to be the lowest in U.S. history — in modern recorded U.S. history, thanks to this team behind me and President Trump's priorities.

BASH: That's great news.

CHALIAN: It's a little off topic from what the President was aiming to discuss that. But of course, that's great news. Yes. But I mean, this gets back to Daniels fact check. I do think this — this discussion about you know, no restraints in this second term and more emboldened to — to do what he's looking to do — I mean, he himself, in the press conference, Dana went back to his frustration in the first term during the Black Lives Matter protests. And we all remember him going across Lafayette Park and then holding up the Bible in front of the President's church out there on 16th Street, and how upset he was with Mark Milley. All of that history is there. But for him, this is a lingering thing that he didn't follow through on in that first term. And now, in the more emboldened Trump 2.0 that we see from the President day in and day out, he feels he can go forward with.

BASH: It a lot easier to quell protests that you don't like when you have members of the military or National Guard on the streets of the cities when the protests are happening.

TREENE: Yeah, and a huge difference. I think that's such a good point that this isn't just it didn't just come out of nowhere. This is something that he has been simmering about for years now. The other big difference is you mentioned the Black Lives Matter protest. I mean, that is when Muriel Bowser, the D.C. Mayor, did stand up to him. It was so notable to me that the first time we heard her break her silence on this was yesterday for the first time, after five days after Trump had made this threat and that is another, I think, you know, it's an example of what we're seeing. The people around him, the outrage and the pushback and the backlash that he faced because of some of these decisions during his first term, he is facing far less of that now, and it's very clear to see that with some of the local law enforcement, including — including the mayor, around a lot of.

BASH: And this — and just as we go to break, I should note that the most violent moment in recent history in D.C. was January 6, and it was an attack on the United States Capitol by a lot of people who were doing it in the name of Donald Trump. And it included the people who were hurt, included members of law enforcement.

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12:21:42 p.m.

6 minutes and 36 seconds

BASH: Continuing our coverage of President Trump's announcement just in the last hour, saying he's taking control of Washington, D.C., the police force, to address what he calls rampant crime, and he's going to deploy National Guard in the nation's capital. The President had this message to those officers who would be patrolling the streets.

TRUMP: Police and they're told, don't do anything under any circumstances. And you can see they want to get at it. And they're standing there and people are spitting in their face, and they're not allowed to do anything. But now they are allowed to do whatever the hell they want.

BASH: I want to bring in Josh Campbell, a CNN correspondent, also a former FBI officer, as well as Elie Honig, former federal prosecutor and CNN senior legal analyst. Josh, talk about what the President just said about spitting in people's faces and not being able to do anything. A is that true? And B, what message is he sending with what he's saying now?

JOSH CAMPBELL: Yeah, Dana, you know, when D.C. Police officers and federal agents sign up, they take an oath, a slightly different oath. But one commonality is those words include supporting and defending the Constitution of the United States. What he just suggested there that officers will be able to do whatever the hell they want when they're handling a suspect. I mean, we're talking about potential multiple violations of the Constitution the Fourth, the Eighth, the 14th Amendment, the protect against cruel and unusual punishment, and ensures due process and the like. And so, you know, you talk to people in law enforcement that — that is a dangerous message coming from the commander in chief in the United States, because any policing leader in the modern era will tell you that to gain respect from people, you know, that's not through brute force. So, a lot of issues there that I'm sure you know, will be discussed in the days ahead. And I also would just want to point out, when we talk about the federal agents role in this surge here, I'm hearing from law enforcement sources who say that, you know, the big question that's still out there is if FBI agents are being pulled away from other major serious issues like terrorism and counterintelligence and cyber crime and the fentanyl crisis. It's a zero sum equation. If they're not doing that because they're out on the streets patrolling D.C. like they're cops, which they're not, by the way, who's going to address those other issues? So, that's what I'm hearing from the law enforcement world.

BASH: And, Elie, walk us through the — the sort of legal basis that the President is using to do what he's doing. I talked a little bit about home rule in the last segment, but just in terms of using the National Guard and maybe even federal law enforcement, federal military, I should say beyond D.C. Yeah.

ELIE HONIG: So first of all, Dana, the President does have the authority to deploy the National Guard within D.C. That's different than all the states, because ordinarily the governors control the national guards in the state, except for in very narrow circumstances. But when it comes to D.C., yes, the President can deploy the National Guard in D.C., and they are allowed to perform law enforcement-like functions. That is a really rare scenario. Usually, military is not allowed to perform civilian law enforcement functions. So that's number one. Separately, the President talked about the Home Rule Act. Now, that's the federal law that established essentially the government of D.C. as we know it now. And the section that the President cited, section 740,

does give the President the authority to take over to federalize the metro D.C. police force. That's the police force that patrols all the streets of D.C. There's a couple important limitations on that, though. The first one is that there has to be a finding of an emergency, and I'd look for that to be challenged in court. Maybe some of the statistics we've been discussing will be used and second of all, that federalization can only last a maximum of 30 days. So, at this moment, he's within the Constitution on the National Guard, and he is citing an appropriate law on the takeover of the D.C. Police. But I would expect lawsuits about that latter one.

BASH: And Josh, the President also talked about other cities. Let's listen.

TRUMP: You look at Chicago, how bad it is. You look at Los Angeles, how bad it is. We have other cities that are very bad. New York has a problem. And then you have, of course, Baltimore and Oakland. We don't even mention that anymore. They're so — they're so far gone. We're not going to let it happen. We're not going to lose our cities over this and this will go further. We're starting very strongly with D.C., and we're going to clean it up real quick.

BASH: Josh, what does that look like?

CAMPBELL: Well, you know, you talk to criminologists, they'll tell you that crime is is complex and certainly, some of the heinous crimes that the President outlined there. You know, for anyone who's experienced a crime personally, this is obviously a very serious topic. That said, you have to look at the data. I mean, D.C., as we've stated, the — the fact is that crime is down in the city. And so, you know, we're seeing or hearing a lot of hyperbole there, I think, from the President that, you know, these cities are — are, you know, being burned to the ground and, you know, we're going to lose them and the like. So, again, because we know for a fact that in D.C., what he's saying doesn't really square with the data. We have to, you know, obviously broaden that look elsewhere as well to actually understand why he — he's, you know, attempting to do this. And I will note just, you know, if you start sending federal agents into other cities as well to do this, not only is there the resource issue that I mentioned, you know, who's going to do the work that they're — they're doing on a day-to-day basis? But I'm — I'm hearing from law enforcement folks that there's also a very real safety issue at play here, because federal agents, for example, aren't trained in doing day to day patrol policing. You know, in fact, people might not know this, but for the FBI, for example, it is extremely rare for an FBI agent to do something like a traffic stop, something that police do. You know, multiple times in any given shift. And that's because whenever the FBI arrests someone, they bring in overwhelming force. They try to control the situation, do it on their own terms. And so, you know, sending in the feds to other various cities as well, you know, that's possibly a recipe for — for danger issues. And then just the last thing I would mention as well gets a little technical, but it's very important that these police officers and federal agents often operate under what they call deadly force policies. That could be different, so if I'm an FBI agent in a squad car with a local police officer in Chicago or LA, or wherever, you roll up to a scene that may require deadly force, you can see the confusion that that would cause. And so, again, this is ripe for a lot of issues. A lot of people hearing from law enforcement saying, if you want to solve this, you know, don't send in the feds, increase the budgets and resources for these agencies.

BASH: All right, Josh, Elie, thank you so much for your expertise. Really appreciate it.