

*CNN News Central*

08/25/25

2:07:10 p.m.

7 minutes and 3 seconds

BRIANNA KEILAR: Earlier today, President Trump signed an executive order that will create specialized National Guard units to “deal with public order issues.” This is coming as Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth has authorized the National Guard members who are deployed in the Capitol here in Washington, D.C. to carry weapons. Now, more than 1,900 troops from multiple states have been activated. This includes from Mississippi, Louisiana, and Tennessee. We’re joined now by retired Army Major General Randy Manner. He’s a former Acting Vice Chief of the National Guard Bureau. General, what do you think this will look like? Specialized National Guard units around the country to “deal with public order issues.”

MAJ. GEN. RANDY MANNER: The average American has to know that this order for what we call quick reaction forces has been in existence for over 15 years. When I was the Acting Vice Chief of the National Guard Bureau, we made sure to put that into the guidance for all the states to be able to pull people from existing units rapidly, to be able to assist the governor for any kind of situation that he or she may need. So the idea of creating specialized units, which by the way, it’s the language that matters, essentially, what the President is doing through the Secretary of Defense is creating units, official military units to quite frankly, guard or not guard, watch the American people. And that’s the thing that is absolutely abhorrent. It reminds me so much of what happened in Germany in the 1930s.

KEILAR: So I mean, Americans aren’t used to this kind of mobilization of federal troops, right? They just aren’t in their cities. Does this prime them to see the use of military domestically to be normal? And what concerns does that raise for you?

MANNER: I believe fully that the President wants to put as a show of force to anybody who opposes him. He wants armed and uniformed military on the streets. If his true intent is all about law and order, then this should be what it is. It should be a law enforcement operation, not a military operation. He should restore the funds for community policing, for education, for the hiring of policemen and women in all of the jurisdictions, whether it’s the largest city or the smallest town. He stripped that out of the bills; that needs to be reinstated. The idea of sending out, again, photo op opportunities with MRAFs and heavily armored vehicles to sit on our streets outside of national monuments and so on, is absolutely just for the optics. I think this is very disconcerting because we are not a nation that is run by the military. We have civil authority of duly elected leaders, which the president has been duly elected. So this show of force both is unconscionable and it’s also something where — it’s just something which is not within the way that our military has been trained. So, are these orders legal? Yes, they are legal. Are they appropriate and are they matched up with the risks? Absolutely, positively not. When I was the acting vice chief, this kind of an action would — if it had been requested by a governor, would never, ever have been approved, let alone ever gotten to the Secretary of Defense or above. And again, we have to remember, this is all about state’s rights. He is imposing federal troops because that’s the only way he can move them into Chicago in an involuntary status, the way he did for

Los Angeles, so again, this is very dangerous and he's trying to normalize the idea of us having military on the streets of America. I'm in shock.

KEILAR: So, Chicago is where the administration is considering activating the Guard next. Let's take a look at crime in some cities, including those in states that have sent guard to Washington, D.C. You can see those in yellow there, significantly higher than Washington, D.C. They are in red states where the governors are Republicans. How does it politicize the military when the Trump Administration is only activating the Guard in cities that are in states with Democratic governors, but not in states with Republican governors even if those are cities that are significantly more violent?

MANNER: That's because it is all about intimidating the people and the voters in the blue areas, the blue cities, the mayors, the governors that do not support his policies. It's extremely clear that while this is legal action, he's using it in that manner. Now, it's important to understand that the National Guard Bureau is actually providing guidance to the states that says, I want you to start creating the capability to have National Guardsmen to support ICE operations. Apparently there are 19 red states that have already said that they will provide volunteers in their local states if called upon, that's within their state under governor control because of course, they're supporting the president. It's very unlikely there will be any kind of support voluntarily from the blue states, which implies of course, that the only way he's going to get National Guardsmen on the street of Chicago is he'll put them on a federal status, which means they cannot be involved with law enforcement under Posse Comitatus and that they would be there just again for the optics.

KEILAR: So, in the week beginning August 12th, which — that was the first full day, August 12th was, that the Trump Administration took control over police here in Washington, D.C. The city actually saw a moderate drop in reported crime, a far larger surge in arrest of immigrants. This is according to a CNN analysis of government data. Trump and his allies point to that and they say, look, this is proof that this is working. What do you say to that?

MANNER: Like most Americans, I fully support community-based efforts to be able to reduce crime combined with an appropriate judicial system to be able to take care of the offenders, to find out if they are proven guilty or innocent. Again, this is a law enforcement operation. Using the military, which are not trained for this is nothing other than intimidation. Think about it, if you have armed military running around with their — again, armed, with these vehicles, of course crime is going to go down temporarily. It is not dealing with the root of the problem and that is, again, community-based policing actions and engagement. So I say again, this is being done on the backs of our young men and women who are being pulled out of college. Parents are not there to take their kids to school, to see them off to school. They're being pulled out of their civilian jobs. And again, most of them are earning less money in the Guard on their duty than they are for the regular job. So, this is just very sad situation as we find the militarization of America.

KEILAR: General Randy Manner, thank you so much for being with us. We appreciate it.

MANNER: You're very welcome. Thank you.