

Trump encourages governors to use aggressive tactics on protesters



Washington, June 1 (RHC)-- U.S. President Donald Trump, apparently agitated and distressed after three nights of violent protests in dozens of cities across the country, including outside of his home, told the nation's governors in a video teleconference Monday to aggressively target violent protesters he said would only respond to a show of force.

"You have to dominate or you'll look like a bunch of jerks, you have to arrest and try people," the President told the governors in a call from the basement White House Situation Room, according to an audio recording of the call obtained by CNN.

In the conversation, Trump appeared angry and made no attempt at striking a unifying or introspective tone, as some of his advisers have been encouraging and which previous presidents have attempted during moments of national crisis.

Instead, Trump said the leaders must seek "retribution" for violent acts in their states and advised them not to act too gingerly.

"You don't have to be too careful," he said.

He chastised what he characterized as a weak response to protests in certain places, which he said allowed violence to take hold. He emphasized his belief the violence is being fomented by forces from the "radical left." And he said he was putting Gen. Mark Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, "in charge" of the protest response.

Trump suggested to governors it was their responsibility, not his, to tamp down harshly on the continued unrest. "It's a movement, if you don't put it down it will get worse and worse," Trump said. "The only time its successful is when you're weak and most of you are weak."

In admonishing the governors for not doing more to quell the violence, which raged again on Sunday night, Trump was reverting to a hardline "law and order" mantle he believes is the best way to confront growing racial unrest across the nation.

Instead of mentioning ways to address issues of police brutality or racial injustice, he said on the call it was time to reexamine the issue of flag burning, which the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled twice is protected under the Constitution.

"Flag burning is a disgrace. We have a different court. It's time to review that again," he said on the call.

In a back-and-forth with Democratic Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, Trump said the state was "a laughingstock all over the world" for not responding harshly enough during a first evening of protests.

"So bad a few nights ago that the people wouldn't have minded an occupying force," Trump said. "I wish we had an occupying force in there."

"You have to dominate," he said. "If you don't dominate, you're wasting your time."

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