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Justice Department to Probe Its Response to Unrest: Protest Wrap

July 23rd, 2020

After weeks of criticism from members of Congress and the public, the Department of Justice announced it was opening probes into how its personnel have handled protests and civil unrest in Portland, Oregon, and Washington D.C. The department's inspector general, Michael Horowitz, said Thursday a use-of-force investigation would be coordinated with the inspector general of the Department of Homeland Security, whose agents have clashed with protesters in Portland.

On Wednesday night, Portland's mayor was tear gassed by federal agents while standing at a fence near the city's federal courthouse during protests against the presence of agents sent by President Donald Trump. The Democratic mayor, Ted Wheeler, didn't leave his spot at the front while the protest raged on and demonstrators lit a large fire between the fence and the Mark O. Hatfield Federal Courthouse, the Associated Press reported.

On Thursday, a judge barred federal agents for the next two weeks from arresting, threatening or using physical force against journalists and legal observers at Black Lives Matter protests in Portland without a reason.

Here's the moment Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler was tear gassed.

He was holding listening sessions with protesters when federal agents fired
pic.twitter.com/HWuBUMMUlg

— Bloomberg QuickTake (@QuickTake) [July 23, 2020](#)

Black Lives Matter and several other civil rights groups have filed a lawsuit seeking to prevent federal agents from patrolling the streets of Chicago. Citing claims that federal agents abused protesters in Portland, the groups said they worry they will be arrested or beaten without cause during their planned protests this weekend, according to the lawsuit filed in federal court in Chicago. Portland protesters said federal agents didn't identify themselves.

Trump said Wednesday that the expansion of federal law enforcement in Chicago and other cities will address rising crime. The move sets up a showdown with state and local leaders, who have warned they will resist attempts to deploy federal agents in the way the administration did in Portland. Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot said the agents coming to her city will aid in gun-violence investigations and that the city will challenge in court any deployment against protesters.

The Chicago Tribune reported, citing unidentified sources, that Lightfoot is planning to remove a controversial statue of Christopher Columbus from the city's Grant Park, in part to avoid another standoff between police and protesters.

The District of Columbia city council voted to cut funding for police against the wishes of Mayor Muriel Bowser, joining a growing list of cities implementing changes in the wake of demonstrations against racism and police brutality.

At a much-delayed Opening Day for the city's Major League Baseball team, every player on the Washington Nationals and the opposing New York Yankees knelt before the national anthem was played, The Athletic reported, before standing for the anthem itself.

The Washington NFL franchise previously known as the Redskins said it is going by the "Washington Football Team" for now, until it has a new moniker. In Australia, Saputo Inc. will drop the 'Coon' name from its popular cheese products in Australia, the latest company to change branding amid a corporate reckoning on systemic racism.

Senator Tom Cotton, an Arkansas Republican, introduced legislation that would cut federal funds to schools that teach the 1619 Project, an offshoot of a New York Times series that reframes the U.S. founding narrative around the year Black slaves first arrived in Virginia. Cotton says the whole thing is "racially divisive" and revisionist history. Nikole Hannah-Jones, the Times journalist who won a Pulitzer Prize for the project, tweeted a string of responses to Cotton's move, including "Insanity" and "Can't defund something that is free."

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Key Developments:

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- GOP-Led Senate Challenges Trump on Confederacy in Defense Bill
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- Trump 'Militia' in Cities Risks Homeland Mission, Ex-Leaders Say
- Washington's NFL Team Will Go By 'Washington Football Team'
- Biden Calls Trump First 'Racist' President

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Night after night for nearly two months, Portland protesters have hit the streets for demonstrations against racial injustice that have devolved into clashes with federal enforcement.