



Written by [C. Mitchell Shaw](#) on December 1, 2015

Chicago Police Chief Fired in Wake of Video Release

Only days after he told reporters that he had Mayor Rahm Emanuel's (shown, left) full support, Chicago police chief Garry McCarthy (shown, right) has been fired by the mayor. Emanuel announced the dismissal of McCarthy at a Tuesday morning press conference, saying that McCarthy was "only as effective as the trust in him," adding, "Now is the time for fresh eyes and leadership."



Chief of Detectives John Escalante was named as the interim police chief. Since he was McCarthy's deputy, one is left to wonder if this is a change or just a shuffling of the deck.

Just days ago — amid calls for McCarthy to be removed from office — the now former police chief told reporters that he was not concerned about demands for his resignation. As *The New American* [reported](#) then:

In that same news conference, McCarthy spoke to the demands for his resignation, saying, "The mayor has made it very clear that he has my back." It remains to be seen whether that will hold up under pressure.

It now seems as though it did not take much pressure at all for Emanuel's support to falter. The mayor told reporters at Tuesday's press conference, "Police officers are only effective if they are trusted by all Chicagoans, whoever they are and wherever they live. In order to bring the level of safety we deserve, people must have confidence in the system. They must trust in the system."

It appears as if the mayor is attempting to distance himself from the man he hand-picked to lead Chicago's police force. In 2011, he hired McCarthy away from Newark, New Jersey, where he was serving as police director. At that time, Emanuel described McCarthy as "a leader with ... depth of experience and a track record for delivering results." On Tuesday, he said that, though McCarthy is "an excellent leader," he has become "a distraction."

He added that McCarthy's removal as chief of police would not be "the end of the problem, but ... the beginning of the solution to the problem." Another part of Emanuel's "solution to the problem" involves empaneling a six-person Task Force on Police Accountability to conduct a "top-to-bottom review of the system." That task force will be led by former governor Deval Patrick.

The New American previously reported on the ways that this issue [has been clouded by both race and politics](#). This writer said then:

So, while some want the events shown on the video to be seen "in the context of a racially divided city beset by violence" and others want to blame the FOP [Fraternal Order of Police] for everything from paying for Van Dyke's legal defense to keeping him on the payroll to not releasing the video sooner, what is left largely ignored is that this is a criminal case of an officer accused of illegally using lethal force where it was not warranted. The racial and political bantering back and forth serve only to cloud that issue and shift the blame.



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What needs to happen, in this or any similar case, is for the legal system to ignore race and politics as it weighs only the facts of the case. A jury will decide Van Dyke's guilt or innocence. There is little doubt the video will play a major part in that decision. The color of Van Dyke's or McDonald's skin should not. Neither should the political blame game going on between the different factions in Chicago.

Now, many in the Windy City are looking at both the dismissal of McCarthy and the formation of the task force as political maneuvers designed to keep the heat off Emanuel. Mariame Kaba is the director of Project NIA — a youth outreach organization in Chicago. She is also an active member of We Charge Genocide — an organization that focuses on issues of police violence against blacks in Chicago. She has called for Emanuel's resignation, saying the city has lost confidence in him and his leadership.

Others, while stopping short of demanding the mayor resign, have called for Emanuel to do something about the "reforms he says he'll make."

As *The Guardian* [reported](#):

Despite his administration fighting not to release the video for the best part of a year — until forced by a court order — Emanuel repeated in Tuesday's press conference that he had only watched the video of McDonald's death a week ago.

Brandon Smith, who sued for the McDonald case, said that "McCarthy may be gone and the mayor is finally talking about the systemic issues, but I and many others intend to hold him accountable for the reforms he says he'll make."

"And we don't want to wait months and months," he continued. "Right now, Rahm can send a clear message to the police force — that McCarthy's ouster is not just a political sacrifice — by immediately releasing all the internal documents and communication about Laquan McDonald's case."

Not everyone is enthusiastic about the mayor's task force, either. As *The Guardian* also reported:

Cook County commissioner Richard Boykin, who has long been a thorn in the side of the Emanuel administration, called for a federal enquiry into Emanuel's role in the McDonald saga. Boykin said the firing "still does not give the public a sense of trust or that it won't be business as usual."

"This is just another task force that's really window-dressing, if you will. This is nothing," he added. "What the mayor has to do is welcome a federal investigation into his role: what did he know and when did he know it?"

Of course, federal involvement is the last thing Chicago — or any other city — needs. And it may be exactly what Emanuel wants. As *The New American* said [previously](#):

What also remains to be seen is how Emanuel will use this crisis to further the [federal takeover of local police departments](#), including his own. One thing is clear, though: While the abuse of power can occur at any level of government from city hall to the White House, the higher up the corruption, the more damage the corruption can do to the nation as a whole and the harder it will be to eliminate the corruption. If local police departments are nationalized under the pretext of eliminating what genuine police brutality does exist, the predictable result would not be less police brutality but more. In fact, supplanting local police forces responsible to the communities they are entrusted to protect and serve with a nationalized police force beholden to Washington would likely cause Americans to look back on today as the "good old days."



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If real reform is to come to Chicago, it will have to come from Chicagoans, not the federal government. Local citizens need to elect men and women of character to lead the city.

Photo of Rahm Emanuel and Garry McCarthy: AP Images



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