



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on May 2, 2015

Sheriff: Baltimore Police Ordered to “Stand Down” Amid Riots

Baltimore police received an order to “stand down” amid the recent violence and unrest surrounding the death of Freddie Gray that swept the city, according to a Maryland sheriff who was there to help guard City Hall and the Baltimore Police Department headquarters. Wicomico County Sheriff Michael Lewis revealed in [an explosive radio interview](#) that law enforcement officers were outraged about the instructions, which contributed to the widespread property damage and looting, and the injuries sustained by about 100 police officers. Critics of the mayor are calling the order “reprehensible” and wondering whether the Obama administration may have played a role in jeopardizing police, residents, and businesses.



Controversial Baltimore Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake had already [suggested that police were ordered to stand down during a press conference](#) last weekend, saying rioters and looters were deliberately given “space” to “destroy.” However, Sheriff Lewis’ revelations suggest that not only were criminals styling themselves protesters given freedom to destroy private property, they were also given a free hand to attack police officers and other Baltimore citizens. And that gave local residents and especially law enforcement a very troubling feeling, Lewis said.

“I was sick to my stomach like everybody else,” said Sheriff Lewis, a former Sergeant in the Maryland State Police, in a Thursday interview with 105.7 The Fan. “This was urban warfare, no question about it. They were coming in absolutely beaten down. The [city officers] got out of their vehicles, thanked us profusely for being there, apologized to us for having to be there. They said we could have handled this, we were very capable of handling this, but we were told to stand down, repeatedly told to stand down.”

According to Lewis, police officers and “many high-ranking officials” with the Baltimore PD told him repeatedly that “they were essentially neutered from the start.” “They were told to ‘stand down, you will not take any action, let them destroy property’,” added the sheriff, who drove two hours to do what he felt was his duty and help his colleagues in Baltimore after witnessing what he felt was the “lack of response” to chaos on Saturday night. “I couldn’t believe it, I’m a 31-year veteran of law enforcement... I had never heard anything like this before in my life.”

Baltimore City police, and all law enforcement agencies, would have been very capable of handling the unrest, Lewis said, adding that they were trained to deal with it. However, the orders from higher up were crystal clear: Do not interfere with or confront the violent rioters. “I heard it myself over the Baltimore City police radio that I had tethered to my body-armor vest, I heard it repeatedly: ‘Stand



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down, stand down, stand down! Back up, back up, retreat, retreat!” Lewis continued.

“I couldn’t believe those words. Those are words I’ve never heard in my law enforcement vocabulary,” he said. “These guys were hearing words that had never been echoed in their lives, in their careers.”

The outcome of those instructions is now obvious as the smoke clears: Almost 100 police officers were injured, including more than 40 who required treatment at the hospital, according to officials. News reports and video footage showed violent mobs throwing bricks and bottles at police as officers often stood there helplessly. Terrified private citizens also came under attack from the frenzied mob, and police were often unable to respond to 911 calls, even in cases of serious assault.

The property damage across Baltimore was severe, too. Over 100 cars and dozens of buildings were torched by self-styled “protesters.” More than 150 businesses were damaged or destroyed, according to media reports. Many are unlikely to re-open soon, if at all. There were also many peaceful protests, though they were overshadowed by the violent riots.

The violence was supposedly sparked by the death of Freddie Gray, a 25-year-old black man with a long criminal history. He reportedly died from a suspicious spinal injury sustained while in the back of a police van. Investigations into the death are ongoing, and six officers have now been charged in the case. Multiple experts have said Gray could not possibly have critically injured himself in the manner described. Another prisoner in the van, though, told investigators he could hear Gray “banging against the walls” of the vehicle and believed that he “was intentionally trying to injure himself,” according to a police document obtained by the *Washington Post*.

At this point, the exact circumstances of the death and the critical injury remain unclear. The developing judicial process should shed more light on what happened and whether the police officers involved were criminally responsible for Gray’s death.

After the riots, violence, looting — and more importantly, the bizarre orders to allow it to happen — many police officers told Sheriff Lewis that they were done serving as law enforcement personnel in Baltimore. They were also heartbroken, he said, at not being allowed to defend their city or protect business owners from having their businesses robbed and torched. There are even indications that gangsters could be targeting police, who feel betrayed by the city’s leadership.

In the interview, Lewis said he felt compelled to speak out publicly because local police officials, who could face retaliation from the mayor for revealing the truth, were not going to be able to. “These guys obviously aren’t gonna speak out and the more I thought about this,... I had to say a few things,” the sheriff said. “I apologize if I’ve upset people, but I believe in saying it like it is.”

Indeed, advocates for law enforcement were outraged about the “surrender” of the city to violent mobs by the mayor and others. “It is reprehensible on the part of Baltimore’s politicians to have ordered the officers responsible for maintaining the peace and public safety to ‘stand down and retreat,’” Law Enforcement Officers Advocates Council (LEOAC) President Andy Ramirez told *The New American*. He also said the “big question” is who was really calling the shots — the mayor, or the Obama administration.

“It’s one thing to fall back temporarily to regroup, and redeploy, but an entirely different matter to surrender and allow lawlessness and mayhem that resulted in the destruction of businesses,” said Ramirez, an expert on border security and an advocate for law enforcement who has testified before Congress on multiple occasions. “This is exactly what the politicians did and allowed. It’s exactly what has happened on a federal level to our Border Patrol, Customs, ICE, and so many other agencies as



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well.”

Lewis’ revelations were echoed by a “senior law enforcement source” cited by Fox News. “The source, who is involved in the enforcement efforts, confirmed to Fox News there was a direct order from the mayor to her police chief Monday night, effectively tying the hands of officers as they were pelted with rocks and bottles,” Fox reported on April 29, adding that the revelations raised questions about whether some of the violence and looting that swept Baltimore could have been avoided.

Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake denies issuing such an order. However, her own statements strongly suggest that she did. “It’s a very delicate balancing act,” the mayor explained in a press conference last weekend. “Because while we try to make sure that they were protected from the cars and other things that were going on, *we also gave those who wished to destroy, space to do that as well.* And we worked very hard to keep that balance and to put ourselves in the best position to de-escalate.” (Emphasis added)

Later, she backtracked. “I never said nor would I ever say that we are giving people space to destroy our city, so my words should not be twisted,” the mayor claimed after sparking a firestorm with her previous comments on giving people “space” to destroy. In a press conference held after the comments produced headlines around the world and outrage across America, the mayor accused critics who quoted her exact statement of engaging in “blatant mischaracterization.” She also defended the handling of the situation: “You have to understand, it is not holding back, it is responding appropriately.”

Already, the Obama administration has seized on the violence and unrest — apparently officially sanctioned by local officials who gave the stand-down order — to advance [his agenda to further nationalize law enforcement in the United States](#). In fact, on May 1, the White House, citing Baltimore, announced a new unconstitutional “grant” program for local police forces, as if a lack of federal funding for police from a deeply indebted, out of control, and practically bankrupt government was the problem in Baltimore. Profiteer race-monger and close Obama ally Al Sharpton was on the scene trying to whip up a frenzy, too.

Numerous radicals, totalitarians, and extremists, meanwhile, ranging from the Communist Party USA to bloodthirsty criminal gangs, have [rushed to exploit events in Baltimore](#) to push their own sinister goals. The establishment media has also been playing a major role in fomenting riots and fanning the flames. In the case of the Ferguson, Missouri, violence, Big Government-promoting press outlets [openly defended rioting as some sort of political statement](#). Billionaire Obama ally George Soros was [later exposed bankrolling the chaos](#). The [Obama Justice Department recently came under fire for funding a “community” group involved in producing a rap video promoting the murder of police](#). It appears, then, that the violence and looting is part of deliberate plot, with officials forcing police to stand down, and the establishment encouraging the mob.

Local police are supposed to be a function of local communities, and any genuine problems that may exist should be dealt with at the local level. The overarching agenda among officials and the establishment, however, has become clear: [Nationalize local and state police forces, continue expanding lawless federal power, further militarize law enforcement, and divide-and-conquer the American public to facilitate the anti-constitutional scheming](#). It must be opposed.

Photo: AP Images

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