

DC Mayor Muriel Bowser Praises Donald Trump's Police Takeover

The city's Democratic mayor has maintained an unusual working relationship with the Republican president.

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WASHINGTON – Mayor Muriel Bowser on Wednesday praised President Donald Trump's surge of federal police into the city, saying it had significantly reduced carjackings.

Officers from various federal law enforcement agencies have backed up the city's Metropolitan Police Department on patrol in the city for the past two-and-a-half weeks, with the White House taking credit for more than 1,000 arrests assisted by federal officers.

"We greatly appreciate the surge of officers that enhance what MPD has been able to do in this city," Bowser said at a press conference. "The difference between this 20-day period of this federal surge and last year represents an 87% reduction in carjackings."

Still, Bowser criticized two major aspects of Trump's crime crackdown: Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers nabbing immigrants and the deployment of National Guard soldiers.

"We know having masked ICE agents in the community has not worked, and National Guards from other states has not been an efficient use of those resources," Bowser said.

Trump declared a "crime emergency" earlier this month following the mugging of an administration staffer. Since Washington, D.C., is a federal enclave, Trump took advantage of a federal law giving the president the power to control city police for 30 days.

In the absence of an actual emergency — the city's data suggests crime has been falling like in other big cities — the president's announcement was an egregious affront to home rule. However, Bowser has mainly sought to avoid antagonizing the president, even as some district residents protest in the streets.

Bowser is one of only a few Democrats who's developed something of a rapport with Trump. Even when he criticizes her, Trump manages to slip in a kind word, which he did on Tuesday while criticizing the city for trumpeting statistics that show crime in decline.

"They have to stop issuing false crime numbers, because I heard the mayor – and I like the mayor fine. I don't care if I like her or not. If she did her job," Trump said during a cabinet meeting. "I wish she were a horrible person that did her job, but she's probably nice, I guess. I don't care. I want her to do her job, but they issue false numbers."

The news conference comes as the Trump administration continues to escalate its takeover of the city, which Bowser preferred to call a "surge" of federal law enforcement. The U.S. Department of Transportation announced Wednesday it would be taking over the city's Union Station from Amtrak, the quasi-public rail corporation running the building. Earlier this week, Trump signed an executive order seeking to expand the National Guard's role in law enforcement here and in other cities nationwide, much to the consternation of Democratic governors and mayors.

White House spokeswoman Taylor Rogers said crime shouldn't be a partisan issue.

"Other Democrat leaders who are criticizing President Trump for cleaning up DC should take notes on the tremendous success that Washington, DC has already experienced under President Trump's leadership," Rogers told HuffPost in a statement.

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Bowser said she had a "courtesy meeting" with the president this week and that Trump's "knowledge of D.C. significantly increased from the first time he was in the White House."

Still, the mayor suggested the surge of hundreds of federal law enforcement officers had filled a gap left by attrition and slow hiring in the D.C. police department — something that had been a concern of hers long before Trump's emergency declaration.

"We need at least 500 new officers, to hire 500 new officers over the course of the next several years, to have the number of officers that we need and to decrease the amount of overtime ... that we use," Bowser said.

City administrator Kevin Donahue said that while the federal surge had definitely helped reduce carjackings, they'd been on a downward trend for the past two years.

"We already had good momentum coming into the federal surge, and it made it better," Donahue said.

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HuffPost asked Bowser whether she'd received any commitment that the "crime emergency" would end as scheduled after 30 days. She suggested it might not, and that the city would be OK.

"We will be prepared to take advantage of additional federal officers to focus on the beautification to support the federal task force."