

Audio shows Trump praised Walz in 2020 for response to unrest over George Floyd's murder

AP apnews.com/article/tim-walz-trump-audio-riots-george-floyd-3b349ec2a8611f242333b76512a82d4f

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Republican presidential candidate former President Donald Trump speaks at the National Association of Black Journalists, NABJ, convention, Wednesday, July 31, 2024, in Chicago. (AP Photo/Charles Rex Arbogast)



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Democratic vice presidential candidate Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz speaks at a campaign rally Wednesday, Aug. 7, 2024, in Romulus, Mich., with Democratic presidential nominee Vice President Kamala Harris. (AP Photo/Carlos Osorio)

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — While former President Donald Trump and running mate JD Vance have been hammering Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz over his response to the violence that erupted after George Floyd's murder, Trump told the governor at the time that he fully agreed with how Walz handled it.

“What they did in Minneapolis was incredible. They went in and dominated, and it happened immediately,” Trump told Walz and other governors and officials in a phone call on June 1, 2020. The Associated Press on Wednesday obtained an audio recording of the call, which has taken on new significance now that Walz has been tapped as Vice President Kamala Harris’ running mate against Trump and Vance.

Other administration officials on the call included Defense Secretary Mark Esper; Army Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; and Attorney General William Barr.

ABC News reported on the call earlier Wednesday, a day after Harris introduced Walz as her vice presidential pick. CNN posted a transcript of the call back in 2020.

Protests erupted in Minneapolis and around the world after Floyd was murdered by Derek Chauvin, a white former officer who knelt on the Black man's neck for nearly 9 1/2 minutes, on May 25, 2020. A bystander video captured Floyd's fading cries of "I can't breathe." His death forced a reckoning with police brutality and racism. Some of the protests turned violent.

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Walz mobilized the Minnesota National Guard three days later to help restore order to Minneapolis after rioting that included the burning of a police station and numerous businesses. Trump offered federal help to Walz later that day, but the governor did not take him up on it.

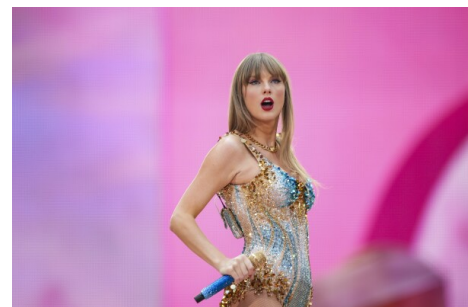
During a May 2024 fundraiser in St. Paul, Trump repeated a claim he had been making lately that he was responsible for deploying the National Guard. "The entire city was burning down. ... If you didn't have me as president, you wouldn't have Minneapolis today," Trump told a Republican audience. Trump made similar claims at a rally in St. Cloud last month.

It was actually Walz who gave the mobilization order in response to requests from the mayors of Minneapolis and St. Paul. Although Walz came under criticism at the time for not moving faster. There was finger-pointing between Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey and Walz on who bore responsibility for the delays.

Trump, in the June 1, 2020, call, described Walz as "an excellent guy" and later said: "I don't blame you. I blame the mayor." The president didn't criticize the governor at the time.

"Tim, you called up big numbers and the big numbers knocked them out so fast, it was like bowling pins," Trump said.

But Trump campaign spokesperson Karoline Leavitt put a different spin on the call in a statement to the AP on Wednesday.



“Governor Walz allowed Minneapolis to burn for days, despite President Trump’s offer to deploy soldiers and cries for help from the liberal Mayor of Minneapolis,” Leavitt said. “In this daily briefing phone call with Governors on June 1, days after the riots began, President Trump acknowledged Governor Walz for FINALLY taking action to deploy the National Guard to end the violence in the city.”

Walz did thank Trump on the call, as well as Esper and Milley, “for your strategic guidance, very helpful. ... Yeah, our city is grieving and in pain.”

Merica reported from Washington.