



State of Oregon
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

TUESDAY, AUGUST 25, 1970 -- 6:10 p.m.

PORTLAND, OREGON

OREGON GOVERNOR TOM McCALL'S STATEWIDE RADIO & TELEVISION
ADDRESS TO THE PEOPLE OF OREGON ON TENSIONS IN PORTLAND

Yesterday Mayor Schrunk outlined the action being taken by the City of Portland to avoid violence in the Portland area. He spoke to the fact that county and state governments are working very closely with the city. I must re-emphasize his words.

Three days from now Portland will host two groups.

They could not be more dissimilar. Their simultaneous presence here has already generated tension - and could trigger violence. We will be tested to the ultimate.

It is my responsibility as your Governor to inform you of the background of this situation; the planning accomplished to meet it; the standard of individual conduct expected; and the certain consequences of failure - by anyone - to observe that standard.

The American Legion needs little description. Its history spans a half century. As an organization, the Legion is dedicated to preservation of the nation's established political system and traditions. It is strongly oriented toward military strength and preparedness as an essential element of national policy.

At the opposite pole is the "People's Army Jamboree." It is - by its open statements and publications - anti-establishment and anti-military. Its motto is. . . "World Revolution." Its supporters seek a broad spectrum of goals - ranging from peaceful protest to bloody violence.

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That the American Legion convention and the Jamboree are occurring at the same time is no coincidence. The Legion members are here as invited guests of the City of Portland to conduct their annual convention.

The Jamboree is here to confront the Legion - and for no other purpose.

The Jamboree - first called "The Revolutionary Festival of Life" - was spawned last spring. It was activated and publicized originally through chapters of the SDS - the Students for a Democratic Society - on college campuses all over the country.

Planning by this group for a massive confrontation with the Legion in Portland continued throughout the spring and early summer. Concerted recruitment of persons to join the Jamboree - primarily through the underground press - began nationwide in May and still continues.

On July 6, I asked the Jamboree not to hold their gathering simultaneously with the Legion. I warned of the possible violence, saying - in part: "I urge you to reschedule the People's Army Jamboree."

My request was summarily rejected.

I have kept the Jamboree under close surveillance since its inception.

Periodic intelligence reports, evaluations and briefings have involved the Portland Police, sheriff's units of Multnomah, Clackamas and Washington counties, the Oregon State Police, the FBI, the Secret Service, the Postal Inspection Service, the National Guard, and the Department of the Army.

Their conclusions were clear - large numbers of young people were coming to Portland to confront the American Legion. The question was: How should we deal with the situation?

Federal intelligence indicated - early in the summer - that upwards of 50,000 young people would be coming.

While the Jamboree's planning is directed toward confrontation, great numbers of the young people attracted to Portland are not coming to riot, burn or kill. They are coming to peacefully exercise their constitutional rights.

Our reports were, however, that some would seek to manipulate the others as pawns to trigger serious and possibly violent confrontation.

This was the setting for polarization facing Oregon earlier this summer.

By then it was obvious that - should the anticipated numbers arrive - Portland could not deal with the situation.

In consultation with civic, church and local government leaders, and with the advice and counsel of the FBI - I committed our resources. As Governor, I agreed to do all I could to prevent tragedy from breaking out in Portland.

Out of those discussions over many weeks there has emerged a comprehensive plan. It's a positive, effective and responsible approach to protecting the lives and property of all in Oregon. That, I believe is what government is all about.

In this situation we have prepared for the worst while hoping for the best.

If the objective of averting conflict is not achieved, we are prepared to put down any violence that occurs. You may be assured that we are well prepared.

True, intelligence sources do report that we may be dealing with fewer people than our estimates a month ago indicated. But, law enforcement officials - state, federal and local - agree that a strong likelihood still exists for violence in Portland.

Based upon their recommendations, I am activating units of the Oregon National Guard in sufficient strength to safeguard

life and property. It is my hope that this will be an insurance policy - that this action, along with others already taken, will dissuade those who would come to Portland to incite violence. If they come in spite of our preparedness, we have the ability to act quickly and decisively to uphold the laws of our state. We cannot afford the risk of after-the-fact activation.

Our commitment to law and order has not tempted us to infringe upon the constitutional rights of Americans to peacefully assemble, freedom of movement, and nonviolent dissent. That, too, is what government is all about.

While we are prepared to deal with violence, keep it clear that our first priority is to avoid violence.

It is within this framework - avoiding violence - and upon the strong urging of local, state and federal law enforcement officers that Vortex I emerged.

Vortex is an activity planned and sponsored by a group of responsible young people, financially supported by People for Portland. This financial support has been committed from literally every major business in the Portland area.

Law enforcement officials agreed that such an activity was needed. Upon their recommendation we surveyed the entire four-county area and granted the use of McIver State Park.

Law enforcement officials advise me of the danger of thousands of young people roaming in bands through the residential areas of Portland at all hours of the day and night - restless, without a home base, without planned activity.

Vortex was a conscious and direct response to the problem of suddenly trying to absorb these thousands of young people into the City of Portland - young people without a place to stay.

There will still be some who want to thwart authority. With many of these, reason and option are of little or no value. To these people, I say:

The State of Oregon, the City of Portland and the surrounding counties do not want violence; but we are fully prepared to protect our citizens. We have prepared the resources necessary to fulfill this commitment. This is not the rattling of swords, this is a statement of fact. The laws of this state and this community will be upheld.

To those who understand this statement, alternatives are available. To those who choose to ignore this statement, less peaceful alternatives are in store.

Vortex was authorized as a safety valve - as a defusing mechanism for reducing the numbers we may have to deal with in Portland.

We can say to those young who are truly dedicated to peaceful disagreement: go to McIver Park or Delta Park, which the City of Portland has approved for overnight occupancy.

These are your alternatives to milling madness.

People for Portland, made up of major business leaders, members of the clergy, concerned volunteers of all types, is working in a variety of ways to avert confrontation.

One of its activities is a rumor control center. (The telephone No. is: 233-2531) If you have any questions now or during the next week, I strongly urge that you contact this center. Rumors running wild can do more to harm our communities than anything short of violence itself.

People for Portland are also training people to stop trouble before it starts. So far, they have trained in excess of 500 citizens from this area, but they need more, depending upon the numbers coming into the city. I strongly urge interested

citizens to join with them in this effort. Additional training sessions will be held at Lincoln High School tonight, Wednesday and Thursday, beginning at 7:30 p.m.

The primary responsibility professionally belongs to local law enforcement agencies - the officers and men of the Portland Police and sheriff's deputies of Multnomah, Clackamas, and Washington counties.

In immediate support will be a substantial contingent of Oregon State Police.

In further support will be contingents of the Oregon National Guard, deployed in and around the city. Some units will be assigned to crowd control, others to the protection of vital public facilities.

The crowd-control groups have been carefully selected and thoroughly trained. Each Guardsman will be armed in a manner appropriate to his specific assignment.

The poise, attitude, and effectiveness of these citizen soldiers should be reassuring to all of us. Significant of their attitude, our Oregon Guardsmen chose to code name this assignment "Operation Tranquility."

It is extremely doubtful that anything will occur that can't be adequately controlled by the units mentioned. Nevertheless, substantial numbers of federal troops are prepared to respond to my call for assistance.

Detailed operational, logistical, and communications plans have been developed for all units.

Similarly, detailed plans have been developed for medical evacuation and treatment; for the jailing of large numbers of persons if it should become necessary; and for prompt judicial proceedings for any arrested persons.

Our planning seeks to avoid violence - our planning will also respond to violence if it occurs. I hope it does not occur - whether it does or does not depends on you.

Let me speak first to you, the Legionnaire:

As avowed targets of political confrontation, it is only reasonable to expect that some of you will become objects of taunting, of verbal abuse, of inflammatory gestures, of obnoxious provocation. The purpose of such acts is precisely to evoke your reaction; even, possibly, in the hope you will react violently. Those who seek violent confrontation measure their success in resulting violence. Don't give them a victory. Don't let them use you. Don't be the tool of the radicals.

Let me speak now to you, the resident of Oregon:

Just as the Legion may be a precise target for confrontation, the community at large is a general target. Many of you, too, will be subjected to the same provocations by those who seek to disrupt. Don't give the provocateurs a score. Just as I asked the Legion, I also ask you to resist the temptation to let fly. I also ask you not to let yourselves be used.

Let me speak now to you, the young person:

Much of what I've said, by implication, casts on you the long and dark shadows of those who seek violent confrontation and world revolution.

I know that most of you are just as opposed to violence as I am. I know that many of you are visiting here just to have a good time, or just to be where the action is, or just because you are curious. But let me point out that you, too, can be used by those amongst you who seek bloodshed. It is a deadly game. Don't be a pawn in that kind of game.

Your presence in large numbers creates physical problems, housing problems, health problems, sanitation problems, and - perhaps most significant of all - your presence contributes further to an already tense situation.

I ask that you respect the human rights and the property rights of others - that you show that you respect yourselves by your own conduct.

I also ask that you stay at home; or, if you do "make the scene," that you participate in peaceful activities.

Now - you of the People's Army Jamboree have repeatedly stated that your objective and purpose is a peaceful protest.

You asked for the opportunity to publicly protest. You will have it.

You asked for a place to assemble. You have been granted it.

You have repeatedly insisted you will not provoke violence. Now - prove it.

To each of you, I want to be sure I am not misunderstood in asking for patience and understanding. Most certainly I am relying on your good will to maintain tranquility during a time of tension.

While I ask these things with sincerity, it should be made clear that actions to the contrary will not be tolerated.

Violence - no matter who perpetrates it - will be put down, vigorously, promptly and with absolute certainty.

Speaking for the citizens of Oregon - and with the solemn resolve to maintain the peace - I want you to know we are willing to accept honest dissent, and peaceful demonstrations.

I am just as firmly resolved that we will not tolerate violence to any person - harm to any property.

Now, let me end on an encouraging note:

Very recently intelligence sources have advised me that the tide of young people coming to Portland for confrontation may be waning. I say "may be" because the reports are too scattered to be conclusive.

The reasoning for this wane in the tide is that the word has gone out: Oregon's preparedness has dampened the fires of enthusiasm of those who would create chaos in our communities.

I know that you - as I - fervently hope this is so.

All of us hope that the decision on McIver Park and Vortex I, for example, will prove to be as it was described by Interior Secretary Hickel in Portland yesterday.

Secretary Hickel, keeper of the Federal Park System, told newsmen it is "both a wise and responsible decision." And, in Portland today, a mayor who has been tormented by crowd problems, New York's John Lindsay, said, "It's the only thing to do."

City government in Portland has supported the decision, both directly and by its own resolution declaring Delta Park available for overnight use during this convention period.

In his moving public statement yesterday, Mayor Schrunk made this analysis:

"In making available such a facility, we know it does not guarantee that there will not be illegal activities or even violence - but it does provide a relief valve and a location where those that desire can gather, hold workshops, debate and fraternize."

Mayor Schrunk might very well have added that such relief valves as McIver and Delta could spell the difference between order and major violence on the streets of Portland,

Whatever the future has to say about our preparations, it cannot fault the fact that we have built with painstaking care against the imponderables of this fortnight.

Nor can it say that city, county and state officials - and leaders of the business, professional and religious communities - failed the test of cooperative teamsmanship.

For weeks now we have been doing those things best calculated to serve the public interest. . .perhaps not flawlessly, but to serve it so as to minimize to the greatest degree possible the risk to life and property - and to Oregon's image as a hospitable and law-abiding state.

Hopefully, this will be the Columbus Day storm that never came, but if it does, Oregon is prepared.

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