

FBI shifts resources to ongoing unrest in Portland

By Gillian Flaccus
Associated Press

PORTLAND (AP) — Portland's FBI chief said Wednesday, August 26, he is shifting the agency's resources to focus more heavily on the nightly racial injustice protests in Oregon's largest city that often end in vandalism, clashes with local police and dozens of arrests.

Special Agent in Charge Renn Cannon said he is pulling agents from fraud and organized crime teams to focus on "acts of violence and federal crimes" committed during nearly three months of unrest. The FBI respects the rights of peaceful protesters to assemble and demonstrate, but near-nightly acts of violence and vandalism associated with the protests have created a dangerous and volatile situation, he said.

"We do investigate major threats of violence and federal crimes. And sometimes a major threat of violence is a cumulative threat that happens over a period of time. It starts to have a really negative impact on the community," he said in an interview with The Associated Press.

"Here in Portland, we're ... making the assessment that we should be trying to do a little more than we have, because the cumulative effects and the nature of the problem indicate that the community needs help," Cannon said.

He declined to provide specifics about the numbers of agents being shifted to protest

cases or which cases, or how many cases, the agency was investigating. The FBI has previously released wanted posters related to two incidents on May 29.

The announcement came as Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler prepared to make a statement the day after protesters smashed windows and vandalized City Hall inside and out. Police made 23 arrests as they dispersed the crowd, officials said.

Demonstrators in the crowd of about 150 also threw bottles and eggs at police, put metal bars in the street to try to damage police vehicles and smashed a security camera on the City Hall building, police said in a statement. The statement said officers used "crowd control munitions" in response but did not say what kind.

The day before, local police used tear gas to repel protesters who repeatedly set fire to a police union headquarters building and arrested 25 individuals.

And last weekend, protesters clashed violently in downtown streets for several hours with members of a right-wing group that showed up to confront them. Video recorded during the Saturday melee shows one man pointing a gun into the crowd, but no shots were fired.

Cannon declined to say if the FBI was looking into Saturday's events, but he said his agency does help local, state, and federal law enforcement with "threat assessments" in

situations such as those.

Portland has been gripped by nightly protests for nearly three months since the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

Demonstrators have repeatedly targeted police buildings, police union buildings, city and county offices and federal buildings with vandalism that includes setting fires, spraying graffiti and smashing windows and security cameras.

Some protesters want to eliminate or drastically reduce the city's police budget — saying the police protects property over Black lives — while the city's mayor and

others in the Black community have decried the violence, saying it is counterproductive.

On Tuesday, President Trump renewed calls to have Gov. Kate Brown and Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler call in the state's National Guard.

"They must stop calling these anarchists and agitators 'peaceful protestors.' Come back into the real world! The Federal Government is ready to end this problem immediately upon your request," Trump wrote on Twitter.

Brown responded on Twitter to Trump's demand, calling it "political theater."

In July, Trump sent agents to protect federal property in

downtown Portland.

Crowds grew into the thousands. Agents repeatedly clashed with people over a two-week period, deployed tear gas, and arrested those they said were hurling objects and trying to hurt agents and damage property.

The American Civil Liberties Union on Wednesday filed a lawsuit against Trump and other federal officials related to the agents' actions, alleging they used excessive force and illegal detentions to try to stamp out Black Lives Matter protests.

The agents pulled back from a visible presence downtown on July 31.



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SEPT 5 SAT Oak St. & Main Ave. **Sisters Fall Street Festival** 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Arts, crafts, snacks and more. Free. For more info, call 541-420-0279 or email centraloregonshows@gmail.com.

SEPT 6 SUN Oak St. & Main Ave. **Sisters Fall Street Festival** 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Arts, crafts, snacks and more. Free. For more info, call 541-420-0279 or email centraloregonshows@gmail.com.

Fir Street Park Sisters Farmers Market 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Every Sunday: fresh local produce and more. Pre-order and details at sistersfarmersmarket.com.

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SEPT 8 TUES Paulina Springs Books Virtual Event **Books In Common Regional Literary Event Series with Geraldine Woods** 6:30 p.m. For more information call 541-549-0866 or go to BooksinCommonNW.com.

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