

Independent Investigation into the City of Philadelphia's Response to Civil Unrest

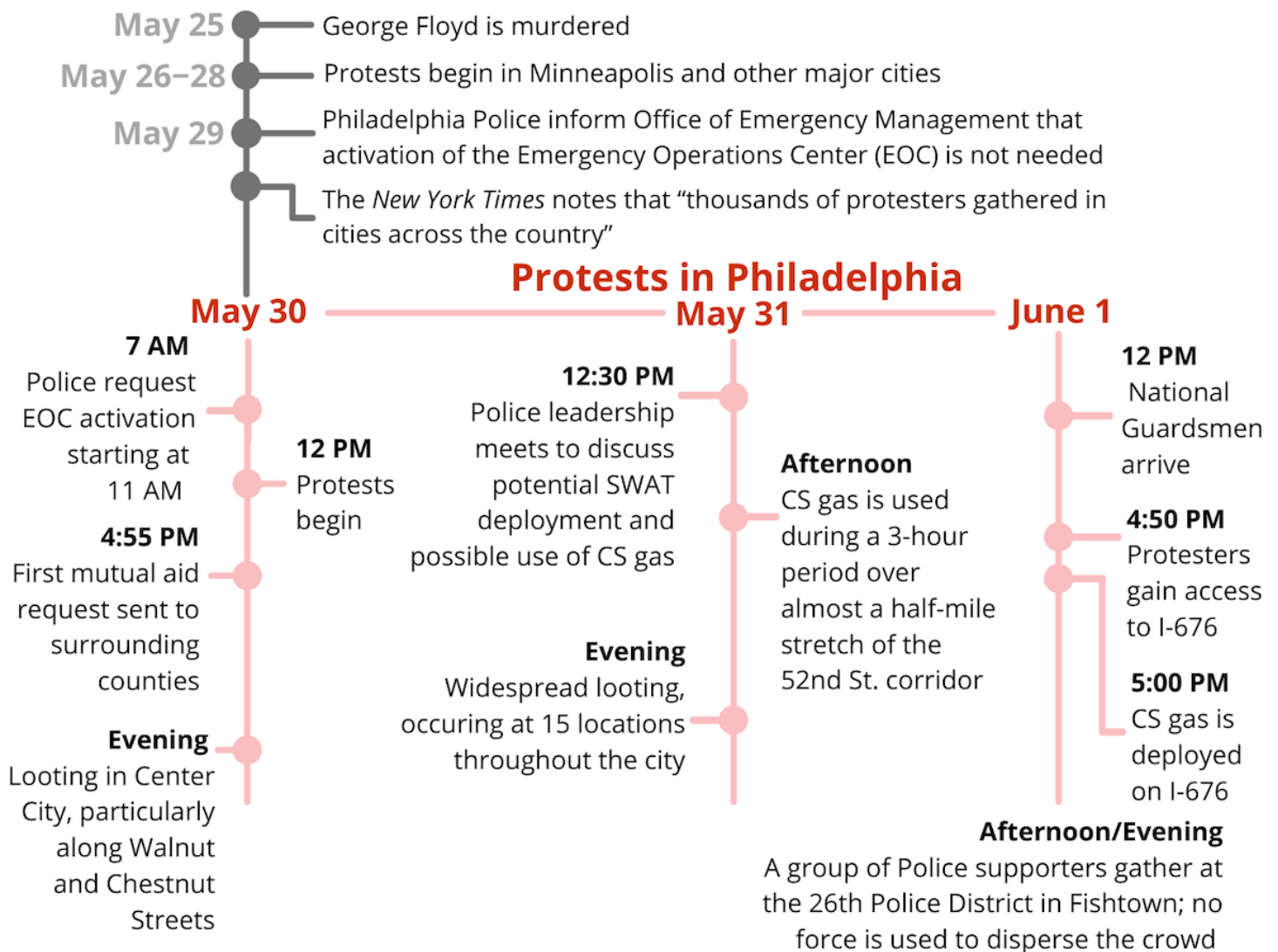
OFFICE OF THE CITY CONTROLLER

The Office of the City Controller launched an independent investigation into the City of Philadelphia's response to civil unrest following George Floyd's murder to determine what went wrong during and how can it be prevented in the future. The Investigation Team conducted dozens of interviews and reviewed thousands of records, including policies and procedures.

Major Findings

- A: The City **failed to sufficiently plan** for the unrest, despite previous experience managing large-scale events successfully.
- B: Many of the issues identified in the report were the result of **a lack of leadership** at the highest levels of key City departments and agencies.
- C: The City **failed to utilize appropriate strategies and police resources** to minimize violence and looting.
- D: The investigation found that **the use of force, particularly CS gas, throughout the unrest was inappropriate and excessive.**
- E: The Police Department had **disparate responses** to those gathered in opposition to police brutality versus groups purporting to gather in support of police.

Timeline of Key Events in the City's Response



Recommendations

The report provides recommendations for the City to directly address the major findings. This includes the Office of Emergency Management returning to its previous status as a stand-alone agency with an independent director, and the Police Department ensuring all key positions, most notably the Inspector of Homeland Security, are filled.

The other recommendations in the report focus on enhancing policies and training specific to civil unrest and provide resources for best practices in community-based policing and modern policing. This includes utilizing established blueprints from policing past large-scale events successfully and beginning the planning process as soon as intelligence indicating the potential for civil unrest becomes available, as well as establishing clearer policies and procedures around the use of CS gas.

To support the review, the Controller's Office created **the Community Advisory and Accountability Council** – a coalition of clergy members, community leaders, business owners and residents of Philadelphia – to ensure the voices of Philadelphians, particularly those who were impacted by the City's response, were not lost in this process.

As a supplement to the independent investigation, the report includes a **Call to Action** by the Controller's Office with input from the Council. The Call to Action aims to provide additional perspective and context around the events and the City's response that were outside of the scope of the investigation, including racism and policing. The Call to Action provides additional recommendations, including:

- To measurably address implicit bias and structural racism, the Call to Action encourages the City to implement the recommendations in the report on conducting training and adopting policies that address implicit bias. The Call to Action recognizes that some individuals, such as those belonging to White supremacist groups, are incapable of or unwilling to work toward addressing implicit bias and should be rooted out.
- In addition to the report's recommendations around CS gas, one of the recommendations in the supplemental Call to Action is to require explicit approval from a majority of the members of the Unified Command Group including the Mayor and Police Commissioner.
- The supplemental Call to Action also includes recommendations for City and State legislators, and the public.

"I want to thank the Community Council for their input and guidance throughout this process. This investigation has been much better because of your help."

- City Controller Rebecca Rhynhart

The full report is available at:

controller.phila.gov.

Is your community interested in learning more about the investigation?

Let us know! Contact us: controller@phila.gov.