

Statement from St. Louis Police Chief John Hayden on Wednesday, June 3, 2020, in response to questions from Post-Dispatch reporter about police union's complaints.

The violence and aggression displayed by rioters, especially Monday night into Tuesday morning, was unprecedented. The attack on the City, the looting, property damage, arson, gunfire directed at officers, and the loss of human life was devastating to everyone in our community. These acts bring no justice to the tragic death of Mr. George Floyd or similar incidents.

The most important decision a Chief must make in responding to riots/civil disobedience is having the appropriate and trustworthy leadership on the ground. Lieutenant Colonel Jerry Leyshock is that person, as he has 40 years of experience and has led the Department's ground strategy in the Ferguson and Stockley protests. Lt. Col. Leyshock is assisted by Civil Disobedience Team Commander, Lieutenant Randy Jemerson, who is not only a tactical strategist, but was very instrumental in mediating between the protest community and the Department during Stockley. Officer safety is always the number one priority for our Department and neither the Colonel nor the Lieutenant would ever jeopardize officer safety or put officers in harm's way. The timing of all of my decisions with respect to what we have seen over the past week was based on the numerous conversations I have had with Lt. Col. Leyshock and Lt. Jemerson coupled with the confidence I have in their collective leadership, which I believe is the best in the region. Our approach is based on our prior experience in the Ferguson and Stockley protests, and the plan has been modified to address lessons learned from both. The National Guard and the Highway Patrol have deployed resources to assist us, as well as St. County Police Department and our federal partners, and I am grateful to all agencies.

Quite frankly, I am not interested in the business manager's Monday-morning-quarterbacking of our decisions at the managerial level, especially since it comes from someone who has never commanded any officers. The business manager for the SLPOA feels a need to thrive on crisis, attempts to invoke panic, and is accustomed to an environment wherein he can control the Chief of Police. A person who is as controversial and divisive as he is, through his words and actions, has no seat at my table; and I am not alone with this sentiment. The commissioned officers who are elected to the Executive Board of the SLPOA have my utmost respect and I encourage them to communicate with me. However, this will be done without the presence of their business manager, who is not a member of this Department.

