

III. Short Chronology of the Detroit Disorder

[Because of the extraordinary complexity of the Detroit Disorder, the staff has prepared short and long versions of the Detroit chronology.]

Sunday, July 23, 1967: The disorder was precipitated by an early morning police raid on a "blind pig" -- an after-hours drinking place -- in the heart of the Negro ghetto. After daybreak, the crowds that had gathered to watch the arrests grew and began breaking into and looting stores in the immediate vicinity. Throughout the morning, the crowds and the disorder in spite of the efforts of Negro leaders to quell the rioters.

Shortly after noon, a police attempt to sweep the streets was unsuccessful and apparently only aggravated the situation.

Throughout the day, the intensity of the looting and arson increased. State police and National Guardsmen were called in, but had little dampening effect on the disorder. During the late evening as the first instances of sniping were reported and the disorder spread to the East Side, a 9:00 p.m. to 5:30 a.m. curfew was imposed over the entire area.

Two persons were killed and over 1,100 arrested on Sunday.

Monday, July 24, 1967: Throughout the night, scores of multi-alarm fires burned in the riot area. Sporadic sniping and looting continued into the day.

During the early morning hours as the situation grew more critical, the initial appeal was made by Governor Romney for 5,000 troops to augment the local and state forces. In midmorning, as community leaders and concerned citizens met at a Negro church in the riot area, the Governor repeated his request, now indicating that the situation appeared to be beyond state control. The President sent Cyrus Vance and a federal team to Detroit as his representatives to assess the situation. By late afternoon, the first federal troops arrived at Selfridge Air Force Base, 20 miles outside Detroit.

During the afternoon, looting, arson and, perhaps, occasional sniping continued as the death toll mounted.

Negro leaders who met with local and federal officials felt that the situation warranted use of the troops, but Vance and General Throckmorton felt there was as yet insufficient basis for concluding that the riot was beyond state control.

On Monday evening, more fires were reported than at any other period during the disorder. As looting and arson and reports of sniping increased, especially on the East Side, some federal troops were moved to the fair grounds in order to make them more readily available.

Concentrated violence against police and fire department personnel were first reported during the evening and continued for several hours as snipers were claimed to be pinning down precinct and fire houses in the area. Detention facilities were becoming overcrowded and the booking process bogged down in paperwork.

Shortly before midnight, Secretary Vance recommended employing federal troops and federalizing the National Guard; the President signed the necessary executive order. Due to the high incidence of violence on the East Side, it was decided that the federal forces would be responsible for the eastern part of the city and that local and state forces would be responsible for the western half with Woodward Avenue as the dividing line.

By midnight, 16 persons has been killed and over 4,000 persons arrested.

Tuesday, July 25: During the early morning hours of Tuesday as federal troops arrived on the streets, considerable sniping was reported directed at police and fire stations. By daylight, some units of the Michigan State Police were removed from Detroit as the first outbreaks of violence occurred in other Michigan cities.

By Tuesday morning the prison facilities were so overburdened that the Prosecutor's office was urged to consider releasing prisoners on personal bond or a reasonable bond.

As the disorder began to subside, an appeal was made by local officials for businesses to resume operation and for federal authorities to declare Detroit a disaster area.

Observers reported that a blackmarket had begun to traffic in looted goods and that many of the participants in the disorder were from out of state.

On Tuesday, 11 persons were killed including a four-year old child.

Wednesday, July 26: According to the former Special Assistant to the Police Commissioner, Dr. Hubert Locke, sometime late Tuesday night and early Wednesday morning, there was a marked breakdown in discipline among frontline enforcement personnel. Between the hours

of 9:45 p.m. and 4:00 a.m. Wednesday, Dr. Locke also noted that at about midpoint of the riot week, the police on the street and in the precinct had discontinued wearing their badges and had covered with tape the identifying numbers on their patrol cars in order to assure their anonymity. By Wednesday morning the number of incidents of arson and looting had significantly declined. Isolated instances of sniping continued.

Judge Crockett, one of a few members of the Recorder's Court who rejected a policy of setting high bails, wrote a letter to the executive judge denouncing the policy and calling his attention to the fact that the practice was violative of state and federal constitutional guarantees. By early evening the prosecutor's office decided to resubmit individual files to the court for release of prisoners on their own recognizance if there was no indication of a prior conviction.

By late evening, a high incidence of sniper activity was reported in the area where the riot had begun. Otherwise, the number of riot-related incidents

and arrests had greatly declined. All fires were reported under control.

On Wednesday, 12 more persons were fatally injured.

Thursday, July 27: The situation was so greatly improved by Thursday that the first steps were taken to restore full responsibility for the maintenance of law and order to state and local authorities. The curfew was lifted and later reimposed as sightseers in the riot area hampered cleanup operations.

A meeting of several hundred University leaders was held to discuss measures for getting the city back on its feet. The mayor announced the appointment of a New Detroit Committee charged with developing plans for the recovery of the city and the building of better community relations.

Thursday was the first day since the beginning of the disorder that no one was killed. Arrests declined to less than 300.

Friday, July 28: During the early morning, the police department reported that there had been no riot-related incidents reported in the Tenth Precinct, which had been the hardest hit on the first two days, and that the area was calm for the first time since the beginning of the disorder. Because the situation had so greatly improved, the first steps were taken to withdraw federal troops from the Detroit area.

Due to the extremely overcrowded conditions in all detention facilities, the local government announced that those persons arrested for offenses such as looting and curfew violations were being released on personal bond.

Units of the Michigan State Police and National Guard were returned to their posts outside the Detroit area.

In a Friday evening broadcast, Governor Romney announced that Detroit was secure.

One person was killed on Friday.



Saturday, July 29: It was announced Saturday morning that Detroit had been declared a disaster area and that as of 6:00 a.m., 400 persons had been released.

Sunday, July 30: By Sunday, the situation largely returned to normal. The police reported that routine incidents were being reported such as prowlers, family disturbances, suspicious persons and the location of loot.

Monday, July 31: By midday Monday, over 2,200 prisoners were reported as still confirmed. The small number of arrests made was for curfew violations. No fires or confirmed incidents of sniper activity or looting had been reported.

Tuesday, August 1: The last battalions of federal troops awaited flights from Selfridge to their home bases.

Shortly after noon, all curfew restrictions were officially lifted and it was announced that all remaining

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units of the National Guard would be taken off the streets by 9:00 p.m.

Wednesday, August 2: Secretary Vance and General Throckmorton announced the in their view "law and order had been restored in Detroit."