

Susan Rice makes claim Russians could be behind violent George Floyd demonstrations

Former Obama administration national security adviser Susan Rice bizarrely suggested in a televised interview Sunday that the Russians could be behind the violent nationwide demonstrations following the in-custody death of George Floyd, although she offered no evidence for the incendiary claim.

Rice's made the claim after top Democrats insisted for years that the White House had conspired with Russia, although Special Counsel Robert Mueller found no evidence to support any conspiracy with Russia by any U.S. actor to influence the 2016 election. Her remarks also came amid efforts by Democrats to pin the blame on outside white supremacist agitators, even though data suggests the vast majority of arrested protesters in recent days are local.

"To designate Antifa a terrorist organization, fine, but let's also focus on the right-wing terrorist organizations," Rice told CNN's Wolf Blitzer, referring to President Trump's decision earlier in the day to brand the left-wing militant group as a terrorist organization. "The white supremacists that he's called, in the past, very fine people."

Rice's claim that Trump praised white supremacists has been debunked. Like Rice, Trump specifically made a distinction between peaceful political protesters and white supremacists, whom Trump said he condemned "totally." ("Very fine people" were protesting the censorship and removal of a Civil War statue, Trump said.)

Rice continued: "We have peaceful protesters focused on the very real pain and disparities that we're all wrestling with that have to be addressed, and then we have extremists who've come to try to hijack those protests and turn them into something very different. And they're probably also, I would bet based on my experience, I'm not reading the intelligence these days, but based on my experience this is right out of the Russian playbook as well."

"I would not be surprised to learn that they have fomented some of these

extremists on both sides using social media,” Rice said. “I wouldn’t be surprised to learn that they are funding it in some way, shape, or form.”

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Even left-of-center commentators were bewildered by Rice’s claim, which was not supported by any evidence. Although Mueller concluded that Russian-linked actors sought to use social media to influence the 2016 election, no evidence surfaced to show that their effort was successful in any measurable way. Earlier this year, the DOJ abruptly dropped Mueller’s once-heralded prosecution of a Russian troll farm, just days before trial.

Journalist Aaron Mate tweeted, “Apparently Susan Rice just told CNN that Russians might be backing or financing this week’s protests in the US.”

“You cannot make this sh- up,” added Eoin Higgins, a journalist at the progressive outlet Common Dreams, in a post retweeted by Mate. “F—ing deranged.”



Protesters demonstrate police brutality in front of Dallas City Hall in downtown Dallas, Saturday, May 30, 2020. Protests across the country have escalated over the death of George Floyd who died after being restrained by Minneapolis police officers on Memorial Day. (AP Photo/LM Otero)

Scattered efforts by the Democrats to condemn some of the protesters have relied on inaccurate information and unfounded assertions that contradict available data and video evidence. Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey, for example, said Saturday that officials thought “white supremacists” and “out-of-state instigators” could be behind the protests in the wake of Floyd’s death, and Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz also claimed most of the protesters arrested were from outside Minneapolis and sought to take advantage of the chaos.

“We are now confronting white supremacists, members of organized crime, out of state instigators, and possibly even foreign actors to destroy and destabilize our city and our region,” Frey had tweeted Saturday.

BIG-CITY DEMS LET PROTESTERS FLOUT CORONAVIRUS LOCKDOWNS

However, a report by KARE 11 showed “about 86 percent” of the 36 arrests listed their address in Minnesota, and that they live in Minneapolis or the metro area, according to data the outlet analyzed from the Hennepin County Jail’s roster. Five out-of-state cases came from Arkansas, Florida, Illinois, Michigan, and Missouri.

St. Paul Mayor Melvin Carter later admitted he was wrong when he falsely claimed that “every person” arrested in Minneapolis protests was from out of state. Frey has not issued a similar retraction, and multiple calls by Fox News to his office seeking comment were met with a busy signal. An emailed message was not immediately returned.



In this May 29, 2020, photo, demonstrators face off against police officers in Oakland, Calif. while protesting the Monday death of George Floyd, a handcuffed black man in police custody in Minneapolis. (AP Photo/Noah Berger)

Frey, like many other Democratic local leaders, have struggled to square their push for coronavirus lockdowns with their encouragement for protesters. Frey had warned that in-person worship services would be a “public-health disaster,” disregarding constituents’ concerns that he was violating their First Amendment rights. Now, his administration has been distributing masks to rioters, even though public gatherings of 10 or more are still ostensibly banned.

“The city encourages everyone to exercise caution to stay safe while participating in demonstrations, including wearing masks and physical distancing as much as possible to prevent the spread of COVID-19,” a news release read. “The city has made hundreds of masks available to protesters this week.”

And, New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo previously lashed out at protesters calling to reopen the state earlier this month, saying at a news conference, “you have no right to jeopardize my health ... and my children’s health and your children’s health.” Cuomo’s directives have been enforced throughout the state: A New York City tanning salon owner told Fox News he was fined \$1,000 for reopening briefly last week, calling the situation “insane” and saying he already was “broke.”

CORONAVIRUS TIMELINE SHOWS MEDIA, POLITICIANS’ CHANGING RHETORIC

On Friday, though, Cuomo said he “stands” with those defying stay-at-home orders: “Nobody is sanctioning the arson, and the thuggery and the burglaries, but the protesters and the anger and the fear and the frustration? Yes. Yes, and the demand is for justice.”

In April, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio told the Jewish community that “the time for warnings has passed” after he said a funeral gathering had violated social distancing guidelines. On Sunday, the mayor asserted, “We have always honored non-violent protests.”

The mayor of Washington D.C., Muriel Bowser, vowed \$5,000 fines or 90 days in

jail for anyone violating stay-at-home orders. This weekend, though, Bowser defended the protests: “We are grieving hundreds of years of institutional racism. ... People are tired, sad, angry, and desperate for change.” An angry mob of rioters in the city turned its rage on a Fox News crew early Saturday, chasing and pummeling the journalists outside the White House in a harrowing scene captured on video.

And, Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti threatened in March to cut power and water for businesses that reopened, saying he wanted to punish “irresponsible and selfish” behavior. In recent days, he has encouraged mass gatherings, even as he condemned the violence. “I will always protect Angelenos’ right to make their voices heard — and we can lead the movement against racism without fear of violence or vandalism,” he said.



Protesters stop and chant “I can’t breathe” as they march northbound on 288 just south of Tuam Street during a demonstration related to the death of George Floyd, a handcuffed black man who died Memorial Day while in the custody of the Minneapolis police, in Houston, Friday, May 29, 2020. (Mark Mulligan/Houston Chronicle via AP)

These officials were just some of the most prominent politicians to have adopted strikingly different rhetoric on mass gatherings over Floyd’s death, including several protests that have triggered property damage, injuries, beatings,

and several deaths. The mayor of Atlanta, Keisha Lance Bottoms, has been one of the few politicians to keep up her coronavirus admonitions. “If you were out protesting last night, you probably need to go get a COVID test this week,” she told CNN on Sunday. “There is still a pandemic in America that’s killing black and brown people at higher numbers.”

“Democratically elected officials have now all-but destroyed any remaining political deference in terms of policies needed to enforce social distancing, limit crowd size and the like,” journalist Michael Tracey said.

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He also suggested the protests obfuscated key data, pointing to statistics from The Washington Post showing that a total of 41 unarmed people were shot and killed by U.S. police in 2019 — 19 of them white, nine black and nine Hispanic. Others noted that the “Grim Reaper” who patrolled Florida’s beaches to shame swimmers and sunbathers amid the pandemic was nowhere to be seen at the protests.

“WE LITERALLY STAYED IN OUR HOUSES FOR A MONTH BECAUSE OF FEAR OF A VIRUS WITH A 99.74% SURVIVAL RATE AND NOW ARE SUPPOSED TO IGNORE NATIONAL COP-KILLING RIOTS?!!” Kentucky State political science professor Wilfred Reilly tweeted. “SERIOUS question, as re these riots - where are all these Governors that gave daily three hour press conferences about whether you could walk down the beach or visit your dying relatives? Is the COVID-19 crisis over?”

Four officers have been fired in the Floyd case, and one has been arrested. A video showed the arrested officer kneeling on Floyd for several minutes as he screamed that he could not breathe, although an initial medical examiner’s report found “no physical findings that support a diagnosis of traumatic asphyxia or strangulation” — and cited Floyd’s “underlying health conditions including coronary artery disease and hypertensive heart disease,” as well as the “potential intoxicants” in his system.

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