

DAVI7 12/01/17 **CHILL
UNC-CH SERIALS DEPARTMENT
DAVIS LIBRARY CB# 3938
P O BOX 8890
CHAPEL HILL NC 27599-0001

C471 02941

The Carolina Times

THE TRUTH UNBRIDED

VOLUME 96 - NUMBER 15

DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA - SATURDAY, APRIL 15, 2017

TELEPHONE (919) 682-2913 PRICE: 50 CENTS

Republican Attorney General wants return to tough enforcement police policies; sets sights on African Americans

By Sadie Gurman

WASHINGTON (AP) - For three decades, America got tough on crime.

Police used aggressive tactics and arrest rates soared. Small-time drug cases clogged the courts. Vigorous gun prosecutions sent young men away from their communities and to faraway prisons for long terms.

But as crime rates dropped since 2000, enforcement policies changed. Even conservative lawmakers sought to reduce mandatory minimum sentences and to lower prison populations, and law enforcement shifted to new models that emphasized community partnerships over mass arrests.

Attorney General Jeff Sessions often reflects fondly on the tough enforcement strategies of decades ago and sees today's comparatively low crime rates as a sign they worked. He is preparing to revive some of those practices even as some involved in criminal justice during that period have come to believe those approaches went too far, for too long.

"In many ways with this administration we are rolling back," said David Baugh, who worked as a federal prosecutor in the 1970s and 1980s before becoming a defense lawyer in Richmond, Virginia. "We are implementing plans that have been proven not to work."

Sessions, who cut his teeth as a federal prosecutor in Mobile, Alabama, at the height of the drug war, favors strict enforcement of drug laws and mandatory minimum sentences. He says a recent spike in violence in some cities shows the need for more aggressive work. The Justice Department said there won't be a repeat of past problems.

"The field of criminal justice has advanced leaps and bounds in the past several decades," spokesman Ian Prior said. "It is not our intention to simply jettison every lesson learned from previous administrations."

Sessions took another step back from recent practices when the Justice Department announced last week that it might back away from federal agreements that force cities to agree

to major policing overhauls. His concern is that such deals might conflict with his crime-fighting agenda.

Consent decrees were a staple of the Obama administration's

efforts to change troubled departments, but Sessions has said those agreements can unfairly malign an entire police force. He has advanced the unproven theory that heavy

scrutiny of police in recent years has made officers less aggressive, leading to a rise in crime in Chicago and other cities.

It's the latest worry for civil rights activists fretting about a

return to the kind of aggressive policing that grew out of the drug war, when officers were encouraged to make large numbers of stops, searches and arrests, (Continued On Page 3)

Obama aides push back against criticism of inaction on Syria

By Jesse J. Holland

WASHINGTON (AP) - Former Obama administration officials are pushing back against criticism of the former president, saying they proposed similar airstrikes in Syria to the ones President Donald Trump ordered this week, but were stymied by a Republican-controlled Congress reluctant to go along with the Democratic president's plan.

This comes after Trump ordered the missile strikes against Syria without getting congressional approval, determined to punish the Syrian government for the use of chemical weapons against civilians.

Trump laid part of the blame for the chemical attack on former President Barack Obama, saying the deaths were a "consequence of the past administration's weakness and irresolution."

Republicans, however, who controlled Congress then as they do now, were adamant that Obama should not act without their approval, Obama aides said. Trump also had called for Obama to get congressional approval before any attack on Syria.

"Once you put it in Congress's hand, it became clear at that time that they were not ready to assume responsibility," said Dennis Ross, a former Obama administration adviser on the Middle East. "But the problem wasn't that Congress wasn't seen as lacking in responsibility, it was that the president was seen as having drawn a 'red line' and when it came time to act on it, he didn't and that had an impact on the way the U.S. was seen in the aftermath."

Obama aides took to Twitter and the airwaves this week to point out what they called the hypocrisy from Republicans and from Trump himself.

"Times change. In 13, Speaker asks Obama how: 'justification comports with exclusive authority of Cong authorization'" tweeted Ben Rhodes, a deputy national security adviser under Obama.

Tommy Vietor, former spokesman for the Obama National Security Council, sent out Trump's tweet demanding Obama get congressional approval. "What will we get for bombing Syria besides more debt and a possible long term conflict? Obama needs Congressional approval," the businessman tweeted in 2013.

Now president, Trump ordered the missile strikes on April 7 without seeking approval from Congress. This followed Tuesday's (Feb. 4) chemical attack on the town of Khan Sheikhoun, which killed 87 people, including 31 children. U.S. officials said they feel confident Syrian President Bashar Assad's government was responsible.

The U.S. strikes hit the government-controlled Shayrat air base in central Syria, where U.S. officials say the Syrian military planes that dropped the chemicals had taken off.

In a statement issued the day of the chemical weapons attack, Trump said, "President Obama said in 2012 that he would establish a 'red line' against the use of chemical weapons and then did nothing."

Obama had threatened Assad with military action after an earlier chemical weapons attack killed hundreds outside Damascus. Obama had declared the use of such weapons a "red line." At the time, several American ships in the Mediterranean were poised to launch missiles, only for Obama to abruptly pull back after key U.S. ally Britain and the U.S. Congress balked at his plan.

He opted instead for a Russian-backed plan that was supposed to lead to the removal and elimination of Syria's chemical weapons stockpiles.

"We had been reckoning with this for five years and there aren't easy answers. And just to simply say, you know, 'the president put up a red line and then didn't act'" is really insufficient in terms of making policy," Richard Stengel, former undersecretary of state for public diplomacy, said on MSNBC's "Morning Joe."

No matter how the United States got to its first assault against the Assad government, what Trump does next is key, said Frederic C. Hof, director of the Atlantic Council's Rafik Hariri Center for the Middle East. He served as special adviser for transition in Syria in the Obama administration and was the special coordinator for regional affairs in the State Department's Office of the Special Envoy for Middle East Peace.

(Continued On Page 3)



CIVIL RIGHTS LEADERS MEET WITH JEFF SESSIONS - (From left-right) Marc Morial, the president and CEO of the National Urban League; Wade Henderson, the president and CEO of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and The Leadership Conference Education Fund; Sherrilyn Ifill, the president and director-counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund; Kristen Clarke, the president and executive director of the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights under the Law; and Melanie Campbell, the president and CEO of the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation hold a press conference following a meeting with Attorney General Jeff Sessions at the Justice Department in Washington, D.C., in March 2017. (Freddie Allen/AMG/NNPA)

Civil Rights Leaders Meet with Attorney General Jeff Sessions

By Lauren Victoria Burke
(NNPA Newswire Contributor)

Earlier this month, leaders from six civil rights groups met with Attorney General Jeff Sessions at the Justice Department to discuss a range of issues that are critical to the Black community.

The meeting was attended by Kristen Clarke, the president and executive director of the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights under the Law; Sherrilyn Ifill, the president and director-counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund; Marc Morial, the president and CEO of the National Urban League; Melanie Campbell, the president and CEO of the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation; Reverend Al Sharpton, the president of the National Action Network; and Wade Henderson, the president and CEO of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and The Leadership Conference Education Fund.

The leaders expressed their concerns about the future of the civil rights gains made under the Obama Administration. They also expressed concerns about the recent rash of hate crimes, the consent decree involving Baltimore's police department and the impact that any potential, "mythical" voting fraud investigation could have on voters' rights.

During an interview with Fox News earlier this year, President Donald Trump announced

that Vice President Mike Pence would lead a commission to investigate allegations of voter fraud.

ThinkProgress.org reported that President Trump claimed that he would have won the popular vote if it were not for three to five million illegal votes. President Trump has never offered any evidence to support this claim.

"I asked [Attorney General Sessions] to counsel the president against the creation of such a task force and a commission, because that commission will be seen to intimidate our communities," said Ifill. "In the absence of any evidence of voter fraud, he should be counseling the president away from such a course. We don't need an investigation into something that doesn't exist."

Ifill continued: "We should not be crediting the fantasies of this president at the cost of African Americans and Latinos feeling secure that they're not being intimidated from voting and participating in the process."

According to the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law, a non-partisan public policy and law institute, "claims of voter fraud are frequently used to justify policies that do not solve the alleged wrongs, but that could well disenfranchise legitimate voters. Overly restrictive identification requirements for voters at the polls—which address a sort of voter fraud more rare than death

by lightning—is only the most prominent example."

Ifill also noted that there were a number of issues that Attorney General Sessions "is not fully informed about," including current police reform efforts involving consent decrees and some ongoing voting rights discrimination cases.

"You have your hair trigger reaction, you have your partisan reaction, you have your, 'I've been against consent decrees since forever' reaction, and we were saying, 'That's not good enough. You're the attorney general and you have to get your hands around these issues,'" said Ifill. "You gotta listen. You gotta study. You gotta look at facts and you can't just look at the partisan talking points for the [issues] that we are talking about."

During the meeting that lasted less than one hour, Henderson said that the attorney general did acknowledge his awareness of the importance of the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice.

At a press conference outside of the Department of Justice after the meeting, the civil rights leaders said that they received no clear commitments to address the issues that they raised during their meeting with the attorney general.

"This was the first meeting, not the last meeting," said Clarke. "There are a range of issues that are important to all of our organizations and we will continue to bring pressure to

bear on this Justice Department to make sure that they are doing their job to enforce civil rights laws."

Clarke noted that the group did not discuss the memo penned by Attorney General Sessions that overturned an Obama Administration directive that called for reducing the use of private prisons to house federal inmates.

Clarke called the decision "incredibly problematic" and said that it reversed years of work and effort on the bipartisan justice reform.

"It was an important decision that came at the end of Attorney General Lynch's tenure that Mr. Sessions has reversed and that we are all very, very concerned about," said Clarke.

Sharpton said that the civil rights leaders did not want "a photo-op" meeting with Sessions and indicated that they had no plans to back off of their positions.

"We give him credit for having that meeting, but we were not looking for commitments, we were looking for him to hear from us that no protests that we were involved in and that we wanted to be clear that we expected him to uphold the law," said Sharpton.

Sharpton continued: "We were not hostile, but we showed holy indignation and we'll continue to be indignant about any threats to our civil rights."

Lauren Victoria Burke is a political analyst who speaks on politics and African American leadership. She is also a frequent contributor to the NNPA Newswire and BlackPressUSA.com. Freddie Allen contributed to this report.