

Beat: Local

BALTIMORE AWAKENS TO DEVASTATION

DAMAGE LEFT BEHIND BY RIOTS

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USPA NEWS - Schools were closed and streets were quiet but wreckage was everywhere as the city awoke Tuesday from a night of tumult and violence. Just hours after Freddie Gray was laid to rest, protests against police quickly deteriorated into devastating riots.

Roving bands of mostly young looters, some armed with crowbars, roamed the city, hurling rocks at police, destroying patrol cars, smashing store windows and torching buildings. Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake toured some of the destruction Tuesday. "I wanted to talk to the people who are desperate for better in Baltimore," a solemn Rawlings-Blake said outside a severely damaged CVS store.

More than a dozen arrests were made and more than a dozen police officers were injured, six of them seriously, Police Commissioner Anthony Batts said in a news conference late Monday. One officer was hit in the head and another suffered severe damage to his knee cap, Batts said.

Batts said it appeared that a number of gangs met and decided that each group would "take out a police officer" after Monday's funeral of Freddie Gray, a 25-year-old black man who suffered a fatal spinal injury after being in police custody.

Social media was alive with "#purge" before and during the mayhem, an apparent allusion to the film The Purge, which featured a 12-hour period in which any crime was legal.

Batts implored parents to take control of their children who might be taking part in the rioting. He said some of the structures that were being destroyed took great effort to erect in ailing communities that need them. Many communities do not survive riots, he said.

Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan declared a state of emergency in the city and activated the National Guard to assist city and state police. Up to 5,000 guard members could be called; Hogan said another 5,000 officers from neighboring police departments were being pressed into service.

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