

The Star-Ledger

N.J. asks residents to report suspicious activity ahead of possible ‘armed march’ at Statehouse

By Blake Nelson

NJ Advance Media for NJ.com and The Star-Ledger

Published Jan. 13, 2020

New Jersey’s top Homeland Security official asked for the public’s help ahead of a potential “armed march” Sunday at the Statehouse in Trenton.

“We are taking proactive steps to halt possible attempts at violence,” Jared Maples, director of the state Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness, said Wednesday in a statement.

State and federal officials were in “constant contact” since a mob attacked the U.S. Capitol last week, Maples said, and he asked residents to report suspicious activity.

Five people died after supporters of President Donald Trump rioted Jan. 6 to stop Congress from affirming President-elect Joe Biden’s win.

The White House released a statement from Trump Wednesday calling on “ALL Americans to help ease tensions and calm tempers.”

“In light of reports of more demonstrations, I urge that there must be NO violence, NO lawbreaking and NO vandalism of any kind,” Trump said. “That is not what I stand for, and it is not what America stands for.”

Trenton’s mayor acknowledged that “there is a flyer circulating online asking for armed protests at all state capitals on Jan. 17, 2021, including Trenton.”

“I know a lot of people are concerned,” Reed Gusciora said in a statement. Trenton police were working with the local sheriff’s and prosecutor’s offices, as well as the State Police, to develop a “coordinated plan to ensure our safety if any protesters stray beyond the First Amendment right to peaceful protest,” he said.

An internal FBI bulletin recently warned that nationwide protests may start later this week and extend through Biden’s Jan. 20 inauguration, according to two law enforcement officials who read details of the memo to The Associated Press. Investigators believe some of the people are members of extremist groups, the officials said.

Many details about the potential threats facing New Jersey are not known.

Gov. Phil Murphy reiterated his commitment to preventing more bloodshed.

“We’re preparing for the worst and hoping for the best,” he said Wednesday during an interview with PIX 11.

“I’ve already had several meetings on this,” he added. “It’s the last thing we need right now in the country.”

Residents can call local police or the state’s counterterrorism watch desk at 1-866-4-SAFE-NJ or email tips@njohsp.gov, officials said.

NJ Advance Media staff writer Jonathan Salant and The Associated Press contributed to this report.