



Trump to deploy National Guard troops to TN city

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Schools seek to balance speech, safety

Tensions over expression roiling college campuses

BrieAnna J. Frank
USA TODAY

The shooting death of conservative activist Charlie Kirk at a Utah university Sept. 10 has brought to the forefront the challenge colleges and universities face in balancing a mission of critical inquiry with maintaining safety in a time of renewed political violence. It's a "major dilemma" for schools around the coun-

try, said Ken Paulson, director of Middle Tennessee State University's Free Speech Center. "We don't want campuses to be able to turn away speakers that don't have the resources for security," he said. "You also don't want a situation where only the most tame and tepid speakers can come because they don't provoke angry responses." The challenge is "keeping me up at night," said Todd Wolfson, a Rutgers University professor who also serves as president of the American Association of University Professors. And the problem is larger than just college campuses, he said – echoing concerns other experts expressed to USA TODAY about a growing national trend of po-

larization and violence. Kirk's death is the latest in a wave of violent acts that, to some, echoes the era in which numerous national leaders have been gunned down. "The concern is something is igniting here in America that unfortunately is all too familiar to those who lived in the '60s and '70s," said Paulson, a former USA TODAY editor-in-chief. Kirk's death also comes at a time when tensions over free speech are pervading college campuses, prompting fierce debate among school leaders about how best to respond.

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The District of Columbia National Guard is accepting pitches to help with new beautification projects in the nation's capital. JOSH MORGAN/USA TODAY

Guard seeks to help with cleanup in DC

Presence is controversial with residents of capital

Cybele Mayes-Osterman
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON – Matthew Cohen couldn't believe the District of Columbia National Guard was offering up its soldiers to help with neighborhood cleanup. "To have the National Guard come to our neighborhood to help pick up litter is absurd," said Cohen, an advisory neighborhood commissioner, one of Washington's hyper-local elected officials for part of the AU Park and Tenleytown neighborhoods in the city's northwest. But he could use the help. So long as thousands of soldiers had standing orders from President Donald Trump to remain on duty in the nation's capital, Cohen wondered, what was the harm if his community took them up on the offer? Troops that deployed to the city in August were supposedly there to combat what Trump called a crime emergency. Groups of camouflage-clad soldiers have since become a familiar presence, pacing the underground platforms of Metro stations in the city's downtown, along the marble halls of Union Station and at the National Mall, home to the city's popular monuments. Soldiers have also been spotted in parks carrying

out tasks typically assigned to gardeners and landscapers – shoveling mulch, blowing leaves and scooping up trash. Now, the DC National Guard is asking city leaders if they might help with local beautification projects. This offer comes amid protests against Trump's takeover of the city under the banner of "Free DC" and the National Guard's own assessments that its deployment prompted "alarm and indignation" among residents. The National Guard may have worn out its welcome, but soldiers were still assigned to the region. Trump has said the ongoing military presence in the capital – coupled with his takeover of the local police force and surge of immigration agents – has made crime in the city a thing of the past. "Over the last year, it was a very unsafe place. Over the last 20 years, actually, it was very unsafe, and now it's got virtually no crime," Trump said of Washington as he stood on a corner of the city's downtown on Sept. 9. "We call it crime-free." Trump's emergency declaration allowing him to seize control of police expired Sept. 10, but the National Guard deployment won't wrap up until Nov. 30, and could be extended further. The takeover remains widely unpopular among Washington residents – some 80% oppose it, according to a Washington Post poll.

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Governor: Suspect in Kirk's death in custody

Joey Garrison, Davis Winkie and Christopher Cann
USA TODAY NETWORK

"Ladies and gentlemen, we got him," Utah Gov. Spencer Cox said at a press conference the morning of Sept. 12. By "him," he meant the person suspected of killing conservative activist Charlie Kirk at a college speaking event Sept. 10. The suspect was identified as Tyler Robinson, Cox said. A family member contacted a family friend, who told authorities Robinson "confessed to them or implied that he committed the incident." The suspect was taken into custody at 10 p.m. local time Sept. 11, FBI Director Kash Patel said. President Donald Trump said earlier Sept. 12 on "Fox and Friends" that the family friend was "a person of faith, a minister." According to court records obtained by USA TODAY, the suspect was charged with three felonies: aggravated murder, felony discharge of a firearm and obstruction of justice. He was being held without bail at Utah County Jail, according to an order from Judge Shawn R. Howell. Court documents confirm Robinson has no felony or misdemeanor convictions. Kirk, 31, was killed by a single gunshot while speaking in front of some 3,000 people at Utah Valley University in Orem, Utah. Authorities tied Robinson to the crime through online messages, surveillance video, and interviews with his family and friends. Ammunition and shell casings recovered from the shooting scene included anti-fascist and taunting messages, Cox said. One casing read: "Hey fascist! Catch!" Another quoted "Bella Ciao," an Italian song

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Utah Gov. Spencer Cox, with FBI Director Kash Patel, speaks at a news conference Sept. 12, announcing details on the suspect in the shooting of conservative activist Charlie Kirk two days prior. CHENEY ORR/REUTERS

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