

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

STATEMENT OF GOVERNOR RICHARD J. HUGHES AT NEWARK ARMORY,
SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 16, 1967, AT 5 O'CLOCK

Yesterday's activity by leaders of the Negro community has established a chain of communication to the riot area which, taken together with other official actions for the containment of violence, has shrunken the face of this riot to the isolated factor of the most despicable crime of sniping.

Needs have become known, including suffering of the decent, innocent, and law-abiding majority of the Negro community. These needs include the shortage of food, milk, and in some cases medical supplies. We have taken firm steps to respond to these needs, among them an appeal to the American Red Cross. These actions are being undertaken with the active support and participation of the community leaders to whom I have referred, and their efforts to help restore peace to the community are continuing.

With regard to children under 16 detained on charges of minor juvenile delinquent conduct, I shall on Monday request Assignment Judge Whipple and Presiding Judge Mindeman of the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court to expedite the release of these children, where justified, to the custody of their parents pending disposition of such charges.

We have had conversations with Attorney General Ramsey Clark, who has been designated by the President to be the central point of communication with the Federal government. We have discussed the potential of several Federal agencies to be of assistance to this badly damaged community.

Congressmen Rodino and Minish, who are here with me now, have indicated that they will introduce appropriate legislation in the Congress if the situation should require it.

Thus while the tragic violence and disorder that have wracked the

City of Newark during the past three days have not yet fully ended, there are at present hopeful signs indeed. Yet vicious attacks by individual snipers on firemen, police, and innocent citizens -- including little children slain and injured -- continue unabated at scattered points in the City.

Peace and law and order cannot be said to have returned to Newark, nor can the vitally important task of rebuilding the social order of this great City be undertaken, until the senseless and criminal firing by the few remaining snipers has ceased.

To end the sniping that remains in Newark, and to help restore peace to the community, I have decided to take the following actions:

1. I am requesting the Attorney General, as chief law enforcement officer of this State, to urge the Essex County Prosecutor to seek the maximum ~~max~~ sentence for conviction upon charges relevant to sniping. These charges might include unlawful possession of firearms, atrocious assault, attempted murder, and the like. I shall also request that prosecution be had by the highest category of crime that can be supported by the evidence. Furthermore I shall request the Supreme Court of New Jersey, consistent with the Constitutional rights of defendants, to expedite calendars to enable early trial of the charges.

2. The cost to the Newark community of sniping far exceeds even the cost of petty looting or cowardly rock-throwing. For this reason, and this reason alone, I will grant Executive clemency to any person who is charged and convicted of a violation of the Disorderly Persons Act for looting growing out of participation in this riot if and only if such person gives information which leads to the arrest and conviction of snipers. One life saved as the result of the the elimination of sniping is worth a thousand broken windows. If there is any doubt on this score, I feel confident that the families and friends of victims already struck down by snipers' bullets would answer in the manner I suggest.

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The measures which I have just announced reflect my determination to bring all those who have shown blatant disregard for the law to the bar of justice. I consider it imperative at the same time, however, that convictions of all persons, if they are in fact guilty, be had in a manner consistent with the letter and spirit of the Constitution. The touchstone of constitutional validity is the precious right to counsel secured by the Sixth Amendment. In order that this obligation of society be discharged ~~humbly~~ fully, I have already requested the Public Defender, Peter Murray, to provide adequate counsel for the defense of accused rioters. Only then can we say that guilty rioters have had their day in court.