

STATEMENT ON CONTROL OF LOOTING
IN BALTIMORE

April 8, 1968

My office has received numerous inquiries today from citizens concerned about the widespread looting in Baltimore. I would like to clarify the lines of authority which govern the control of this situation.

With the Federalizing of the Maryland National Guard and the calling in of Federal reinforcements, all activities to control looting and other acts of civil disorder in the affected areas of the State are under the direct authority of Lt. Gen. Robert H. York. In addition to these military forces, State and local police involved in the effort to restore order are under his supervision.

I want to emphasize that the forces being deployed within the affected areas, especially the regular Army troops brought in yesterday and today, are thoroughly trained in riot control. They include veterans in combating the outbreaks of civil disorder that have occurred before in other cities and states.

I have been and will remain in close contact with the Attorney General of the United States, Ramsay Clark, and with General York, the commander in charge. I have every confidence in the willingness and ability of these Federal officials, and in our own State and Baltimore City forces, to put down this disorder as quickly as possible and with a minimum loss of life and property.

Our State and City commanders — Gen. George Gelston, Col. Robert Lally of the State Police, and Baltimore Police Commissioner Donald Pomerleau — are all working closely with the Federal commander.

Let us all remember that the control of instances of looting and other unlawful acts depends on the judgment of the tactical commander on the scene. We must make sure these officers are allowed to exercise this judgment without interference from anyone.

I have been assured that the resources required to restore order and stability to our State are at the disposal of General York, and there is no reason to doubt his intention to employ them decisively.