

Mayor fights off all attempts to turn the city into a riot situation. Emergency Financial Control Board President Steven Berger and a Con Edison representative try to gain audience with the Mayor during the night to feed him pre-packaged lines to "explain" the blackout and to call the situation in New York City as desperate and in need of state intervention. Beame refuses to see them, and rolls up his sleeves to put the city on a healthy footing.

Beame groups together his police and firemen, thousands of whom had shown up voluntarily during the first hours of the blackout, and give strict orders that no weapons should be used except under the gravest of "deadly circumstances" — an order that is followed to the letter. Unofficially, Beame sends the word down that under no circumstances should the word "riot" be used to describe any situation, only "disturbance."

Day One: July 14

******From the morning hours and throughout the day, Beame and his allied politicians battle attempts by other city and state officials to guarantee a riot by bringing in the National Guard. Simultaneously, the Mayor opens fire on Con Edison for "gross negligence" in allowing the blackout to occur in the first place — an attack which Charles Luce of Con Edison tries to counter by charging that the Mayor was "playing politics."

******First reports received by NSIPS are that Governor Carey has spoken with the Mayor between 8 and 10 a.m.

and urged him to accept National Guard troops. Beame refuses. The Governor puts the Guard on a "standby" status anyway. Now Beame raises the ante against Con Edison. He calls for the Federal Power Commission to investigate Con Edison and the blackout.

******At this point the political forces who wanted a riot come out of the woodwork. Bronx Borough President Robert Abrams, on a radio call-in show in the early attention attacks Beame for letting the city deteriorate and calls openly for deploying National Guard troops. In response, U.S. congressman Herman Badillo from the Bronx calls into that radio show to denounce Abrams. Badillo states that a National Guard deployment would start a riot, not prevent one — that the Guard was simply not trained, like New York City police, to handle the situation.

Shortly after Abrams' statement Manhattan Borough President Percy Sutton joins Abrams in calling for a National Guard deployment and furthermore attacks the city for putting looters in the "Tombs" (a Manhattan detention center which had been closed) where they were "without food and water."

EFCB head Berger holds an impromptu press conference that morning announcing provocatively that all financial matters during the crisis are going to be under his control, since it is "an emergency," and implies strongly that Mayor Beame will have to answer to *him*.

******At noon, the Mayor holds his press conference. He

NYPD Spokesman: 'We Didn't Want The National Guard....'

An officer in the Public Information Office of the New York City Police Department explained deployments and thinking during the blackout in the following interview:

A: We had about 8,600 men out on the first night, at least 6,000 were sent into the black and Puerto Rican ghetto areas, with the rest of us spread out to cover the rest of the city. Overall, people throughout the city were just great. We made over 3,500 arrests and the last count I saw, over 430 police officers were injured, with 18 hospitalized and many in critical condition. The cop who was just shot today, at 3:00 p.m. in the 34th precinct, he's in critical condition. Shot twice in the chest. Four cops were beaten brutally with baseball clubs.

Orders came down not to use weapons unless faced with extreme bodily injury, but you know with people throwing rocks and bottles by the time you can make that determination, well it's too late. Those cops beaten with the baseball bats, they didn't go for their guns. We practiced restraint facing tremendous odds.

Q: How did the police department feel about calling in the Guard?

A: We didn't want the Guard called in. History will bear me out on this, whenever they've been called in is when you have a riot on your hands. The Guard is made up of civilians, who can't handle themselves in this kind of situation; they panic and use

firepower and bang! — you've got a riot on your hands. They're not professionals. We wanted to bring in State Troopers, professional men, who are able to stare a crowd down...In my opinion, if the troopers had been brought in on the first night, not as much damage would have been done.

Q: What about the Department of Justice, they have people here in the city from their Community Relations Service (CRS) and from their riot monitoring apparatus, the people who make the determination as to whether or not federal intervention...

A: Yeah, well here a political decision was made, unofficially orders came down that we were not to report a riot, or anything like a riot potential, just to report disturbances.

Q: Are you saying that NYPD made a political decision not to report a riot potential, so as to give the Justice Department any reason for calling for federal intervention, that by reporting in "disturbances" the Department felt they could keep the situation under police control and avoid Carter calling out the National Guard?

A: You got it, we had the situation under control, I think the Department did a good job. We would have liked to have gotten the troopers earlier than we did, but we wanted to avoid bringing in the National Guard unless it was absolutely necessary.