

Reckless Twitter hashtag or serious future policy? US cops give RT their views on 'defund the police' campaign

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Calls to strip law enforcement of funds should remain on social media and don't reflect reality, a police union president told RT. A former NYPD commander countered that some funds could be reallocated and restored if needed.

Nationwide protests sparked by the death of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis cops last month have spawned a growing movement to defund police departments. The radical idea has already been embraced by Minneapolis City Council, which has assembled a veto-proof majority to replace traditional law enforcement with a "community-led system." The proposal, which proponents admit will take time to fully implement, has sparked fierce debate about how to ensure public safety in America's cities while rooting out discrimination and corruption.

Stripping the police of funding would have serious consequences, and those who support the idea on social media are likely not the ones who will be most affected by such extreme measures, Joe Gamaldi, president of the Houston Police Officers' Union, told RT.

Gamaldi argued that now was not the right time to cut spending on law enforcement, as crime will likely increase due to the large number of Americans now out of work. "Anti-police rhetoric" has grown in volume over the past few years and does not accurately reflect how the vast majority of officers behave, he stressed.

But with the US spending an estimated \$115 billion a year on law enforcement – a figure that has almost tripled since 1977 – some have argued that money given to police could be better spent elsewhere.

A former NYPD commander explained to RT that he felt some police departments would be able to reduce their budgets and still do their jobs effectively.

"I'm not for defunding police all the way, but I'm quite sure – especially given this pandemic and this recession that we're in – they can find some ways to free up some of that money," Corey Pegues said, adding that purging departments of corruption and "brutal" cops should be the "number one issue."

For now, the prospect of reducing police budgets or abolishing departments altogether is not popular in the United States, with two-thirds of Americans opposing the idea in a recent YouGov poll.
