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JOHNSON, EMANUEL HOPE FOR FEDERAL RESOURCES AS TRUMP REACTS AGAIN TO STILL-HIGH CHICAGO VIOLENCE

By Annie Sweeney and Katherine Skiba | CHICAGO TRIBUNE
Violence in Chicago remains stubbornly high as the city recorded about the same number of homicides and shootings in January as the year-earlier period, according to statistics released Wednesday by the Police Department.

Much of the violence remains concentrated in three police districts—Englewood on the South Side and Harrison and Austin on the West Side—where half of the homicides took place, Superintendent Eddie Johnson said at a news conference at the Englewood District station.

Asked about recent comments by President Trump about Chicago's violence, Johnson said he welcomed the president's attention to the problem, saying he'd like more federal financial support for programs to support the most troubled neighborhoods. "Like the fact that he recognizes Chicago has some challenges," said Johnson, who noted that other cities also are seeing a spike in violence.

At about the same time, during a White House listening session to mark African-American History Month, Trump raised the issue again, saying that violence in Chicago was "totally out of control," according to an official transcript.

"... We're going to have to do something

about Chicago," the president said. "Because what's happening in Chicago should not be happening in this country."

Last week a tweet from Trump drew wide attention. "If Chicago doesn't fix the horrible 'carnage' going on ... I will send in the Feds!" he wrote.

Told of Trump's latest comments, Mayor Emanuel also emphasized at a separate news conference that he wanted more help from federal law enforcement agencies as well. He also spoke of a need for more assistance to prosecute gun crimes as well as funding for upgrades to Police Department technology and to expand jobs programs. He said that the president is welcome to come see what the city is doing to combat violence but that he would prefer the specific support he's already requested.

"What I would really like is the federal resources," he said after taking part in a mentoring meeting with Cubs President Theo Epstein and students at a Hyde Park high school. "I'm not saying he can't visit, what I'm saying is what I

would welcome is the resources to back up."

While discussing what he has asked for from the Trump administration, Emanuel said he spoke "as recently as last week" with Renee Priebus, Trump's chief of staff. The mayor did not offer specifics on what they discussed, and the mayor's press office did not immediately respond to requests for more details.

With pressure mounting to find solutions, Johnson announced at the news conference that the department was launching intelligence centers at two districts that will use more technology to speed up how quickly officers can respond to shots fired.

The pilot project, starting in the Englewood and Harrison districts, will include data pinpointing the location where gunshots have been fired. Officers in the districts will also be linked by smartphone technology to the data to improve how quickly they can respond to the scene.

Johnson said Chicago recorded 51 homicides in January, one more than the first

month of 2016, a year that would emerge as the most violent in two decades.

Across the city the department said, 18 of Chicago's 77 neighborhoods saw an increase in homicides. In the other 59, homicides remained the same or fell below levels a year earlier.

One bright note was the Deering District on the Southwest Side, which posted a 50 percent decline in homicides, the department said.

Johnson began the news conference on a lighter note, referring to his near-fainting at a news conference last Friday when the department first tried to announce the new crime-fighting efforts. Later that day, Johnson revealed that he was on a waiting list for a kidney transplant but blamed his "lightheadedness" in the morning on his taking blood pressure medicine on an empty stomach.

"Good morning, déjà vu all over again," Johnson said Wednesday to start the news conference.

CHICAGO TRIBUNE'S JOHN BYRNE CONTRIBUTED.