

MIAMI POLICE CHIEF RESIGNS WITH PARTING SHOT AT MAYOR OVER REACTION TO ELIAN;

RAID

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Body

* Chief William O'Brien - who says his departure shouldn't affect policing of a massive protest planned for today - calls the mayor "divisive and destructive."

The fallout from the Elian Gonzalez raid sank the city government deeper into chaos Friday, with the police chief resigning a day after the mayor fired the city manager.

In stepping down, Police Chief William O'Brien lashed out at Mayor Joe Carollo, who had criticized O'Brien for failing to notify him about the raid.

"I refuse to be the lightning rod of divisiveness in this community," O'Brien said. "I refuse to be the chief of police in a city that has someone as divisive and destructive as Joe Carollo as mayor."

O'Brien had an hour's notice before federal agents raided the home of Elian's Miami relatives at 5:15 a.m. Saturday. He has said he didn't want to tip off the mayor, who unlike O'Brien is Cuban-American and had openly sided with the relatives.

O'Brien's emotional resignation came less than 18 hours after Carollo fired the city manager, Donald Warshaw, during a heated hearing at which dozens of residents said police abused them while they protested the pre-dawn raid.

O'Brien and Warshaw said their departures would not affect the city's ability to ensure that a massive Elian protest today would be safe and orderly. But the departure of the city's two top professional managers leaves Miami once again in political turmoil.

"We're in very sad and trying times in the city of Miami," said City Commissioner Johnny Winton.

Carollo wanted Warshaw to fire the police chief. In Miami, only the city manager can fire department heads. When he refused, Carollo fired Warshaw, but the mayor maintains his decision had nothing to do with the raid.

Carollo told one news service that he fired Warshaw not over the raid or O'Brien but because of alleged misuse of a charity credit card and said there would soon be corruption arrests in the Police Department.

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"Mr. Warshaw has been trying to paint himself as the great white hope. He's the great white fraud," Carollo said. "Mr. O'Brien couldn't lead himself out of a paper bag. I wouldn't even trust him leading a Girl Scout troop."

When O'Brien announced his resignation at police headquarters, his words drew applause from a crowd of emotional police and city employees.

"They wanted to know again who gave the order and who was responsible, I want to say again, I gave the order and I am the one who is responsible," said O'Brien, a 25-year Miami police veteran and Vietnam-era fighter pilot.

James Goldman, the Immigration and Naturalization Service agent who led the raid, called O'Brien a "hero of this mission."

"He did what we asked him to do - to maintain operational security, not to reveal the nature of the search warrant," he said.

O'Brien, 56, said he will remain on the job until another chief is appointed, which could happen as early as next week.

Carollo said O'Brien's resignation was orchestrated by Warshaw to save his city manager's job.

"He was made into the sacrificial lamb to resign," Carollo said. "He was sacrificed by Mr. Warshaw so that by doing this, Mr. Warshaw is saving himself."

Warshaw said he wouldn't lobby to regain his job. "There are no deals being made," he said.

The city commission has voted to create a committee to investigate police involvement in the seizure of Elian and any police brutality that might have occurred during the protests. More than 300 people were arrested, and tear gas was used to disperse crowds after the boy was seized.

Elian, found adrift on an inner tube Thanksgiving Day after his mother and 10 other Cubans drowned, was reunited with his father after the raid.

A federal appeals court has ordered that the 6-year-old boy remain in the United States until the court rules on the Miami relatives' bid for him to have an asylum hearing. For now, Elian is living at the rural Wye River retreat in Maryland with his father, stepmother and half brother.

They were joined Thursday by four of Elian's schoolmates from his hometown of Cardenas, four of their parents and Elian's doctor.

That same day, the appeals court rejected the Miami relatives' request to visit the boy and also ruled that Elian's father, Juan Miguel Gonzalez, may intervene in the appeal. Such a move would allow the father to drop the case. Arguments are scheduled for May 11.

Also Friday, the Senate Judiciary Committee postponed a hearing scheduled for Wednesday to examine legal issues in the raid. The Justice Department said it needed more time to supply documents.

The city also is grappling with fiscal troubles. In 1996, city officials revealed a \$ 68 million deficit in the city's \$ 275 million budget.

Only recently has Miami begun to see the fruits of efforts to bring order to its finances. The city's bonds are rated just above junk status, and Wall Street credit analysts - who have complimented the efforts of Warshaw - frequently urge city leaders to maintain political and economic stability.

Jim Corey, a political science professor at the University of Miami, said the latest squabble "makes Miami the laughingstock of the United States. It confirms the image of a banana republic."

Graphic

PHOTO Photo from THE ASSOCIATED PRESS - **Miami** City Manager Donald Warshaw (left) confers with **Miami Police Chief** William O'Brien on Thursday after Warshaw was fired by **Mayor** Joe Carollo. On Friday, O'Brien **resigned** under fire from Carollo for not informing him in advance of the federal **raid** last week to seize **Elian** Gonzalez from his relatives' home.

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