



Fraternal Order of Police United States Park Police Labor Committee

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June 9, 2022

Christopher Stock, Acting Chief
United States Park Police

Charlie Strickfaden, Director
Branch of Communications, External Affairs, and Special Park Uses
Golden Gate NRA

Sergeant Thomas Twiname
Public Information Officer
United States Park Police

Dear Acting Chief Stock, Director Strickfaden and Sergeant Twiname:

I am writing in response to your recent public statements regarding the May 24th safety warning issued by the United States Park Police Fraternal Order of Police (USPPFOP) involving the National Parks patrolled by the USPP in the City of San Francisco.

First, Director Strickfaden wrote that "we disagree with the assertion of the FOP." Specifically, what do you disagree with? **Are you suggesting that, despite the agency's own minimum staffing level of 83 sworn officers in San Francisco, 32 sworn officers with only 11 patrol officers is sufficient to secure the thousands of daily tourists and visitors to Golden Gate National Recreation Area and the Presidio 24/7/365? Or, are you suggesting that the starting salary for US Park Police Officers assigned to the SFFO (\$67,769) is a fair and competitive living wage for men and women making their home in the San Francisco metro area?** Those are the only two assertions made in the May 24th safety warning so I am anxious to learn more about the areas in which we apparently "disagree."

To their credit, the National Park Service did concede to at least one journalist that "the USPP has seen a decrease in staffing over the past decade," and suggested that "restoring staffing capacity across the National Park Service is a priority." How so? **Given this NPS "priority" will the National Park Service and Department of Interior lend its support to pending bipartisan legislation (HR 3924, the US Park Police Modernization Act) that would move the agency much closer to minimum staffing levels at the USPP?** Will they take immediate action to fix the staffing crisis that has been degrading for years?

Second, media reports suggest that Sergeant Twiname dismissed the USPPFOP May 24th safety warning because "USPP current staffing in San Francisco includes patrol officers, detectives, identification technicians, canine officers and horse mounted officers." Our members would like to understand the relevance of such a statement to the current crisis involving the number of officers assigned to the San Francisco Field Office (SFFO). These specialized units rarely, if ever, perform their primary functions in order to supplement patrol operations because of staffing.

Finally, in his written statement to the media, the Sergeant Twiname expressed “disappointment” in the FOP’s “misleading claims that don’t represent the facts or reality on the ground.” According to the SFFO patrol officers I’ve met with *in person* multiple times over the last few months they have had just one visit from the Chief over the last several years. **To be frank, USPP management has no earthly idea what the “reality on the ground” is or, if they do, they are willfully negligent in dealing with the very real risks faced by San Francisco USPP officers and the public we serve.** We encourage the Chief’s Office and Sergeant Twiname to visit San Francisco so they can get a better grasp of the “facts or reality on the ground.”

It has been suggested to me that the agency is most upset that our May 24th safety warning was alarming to the general public. Let me assure you, my statement was intended to alarm and inform and I stand by every word. **Anyone who suggests that 11 patrol officers is enough to sufficiently protect and serve the Golden Gate National Recreation Area and the Presidio around the clock is badly informed, lacking fundamental law enforcement knowledge, or intellectually dishonest. The public might not “feel” the undue safety risk on a daily basis – but it is a very real safety risk indeed.**

Therefore, **YOU (the National Park Service/Department of Interior) should have issued the safety warning even before we did on May 24th and you should continue issuing such warnings until the public can reasonably feel comfortable knowing that law enforcement is in position to timely respond to emergencies throughout the parks at any time on any day.** The USPPFOP could no longer look the other way on the obvious dangers and, because you chose to keep the public uninformed, we felt morally compelled to issue the public safety warning. Ignoring the dangers and keeping the public unaware is not an option our officers would ever consider. This staffing crisis was created by mismanagement and neglect on behalf of USPP, NPS, and DOI leadership – not the rank-and-file Officers who do their best to keep the public safe every day.

We hope that you will recalibrate the NPS position on the staffing crisis at the USPP and work with us to fix the problem on behalf of the public, communities, and businesses we proudly serve and protect. **The parks in San Francisco are stunningly beautiful but, for now at least, they are insufficiently protected by law enforcement and the public deserves to be aware of that reality.**

Respectfully,



Kenneth Spencer, Chairman
United States Park Police Fraternal Order of Police