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August 9, 2024

The Honorable Debra Haaland
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Haaland,

It is with grave concern that I write to you once again about your failure to adequately address the criminal, violent actions of pro-terror, anti-Israel protesters on federal property. For the second time in two months, U.S. Park Police (USPP) officers have been left with inadequate resources and insufficient numbers of officers to defend the public and protect federal property from a malicious mob.

As you know, on July 24, 2024, “a mob of thousands”¹ occupied Columbus Plaza at Union Station in Washington, D.C.—a federal property. This group desecrated and burned American flags, vandalized landmarks, and assaulted USPP officers.²

According to Kenneth Spencer, the Chairman of the United States Park Police Fraternal Order of Police (USPP FOP), “[D]espite having only 29 officers available to mitigate damage - 29! - with no additional help from the Department of the Interior [DOI], we processed several arrests for charges ranging from assault on a police officer to destruction of government property.”³

This latest episode in a string of violent uprisings on federal property in our nation’s capital is especially concerning given my repeated attempts to seek support for the USPP, which you have completely ignored.

In my February 6, 2024 letter to you (attached), I highlighted the urgent need for improved recruitment and retention efforts within the USPP to address alarming attrition rates, outdated pay scales, and chronic staffing shortages.

¹ [USPP FOP on X: "PRESS RELEASE: Chairman Kenneth Spencer released the following statement regarding the violent protests at Columbus Circle in Washington, DC that occurred on July 24, 2024: https://t.co/STLyTNnL74" / X](https://t.co/STLyTNnL74)

² [USPP FOP on X: "Nothing to see here. Dragging police officers, burning flags, and vandalizing public property is peaceful... 2020 all over again, except this time we have fewer officers... no help from @Interior... #DefundThePolice https://t.co/IPsaqMqNFk" / X \(twitter.com\)](https://t.co/IPsaqMqNFk)

³ [USPP FOP on X: "PRESS RELEASE: Chairman Kenneth Spencer released the following statement regarding the violent protests at Columbus Circle in Washington, DC that occurred on July 24, 2024: https://t.co/STLyTNnL74" / X](https://t.co/STLyTNnL74)

Additionally, in my letter dated June 13, 2024 (attached), I emphasized the critical need for your unequivocal condemnation and decisive action following violent incidents near the White House. As we know, these events involved pro-terror, anti-Israel agitators, and the letter stressed the importance of ensuring the safety and security of federal personnel and properties.

Your lack of meaningful action or public condemnation only serves to embolden these agitators. Your failure to act decisively jeopardizes the safety of federal personnel and diminishes public trust in DOI's ability to uphold the rule of law.

Given these events and your apparent inaction, I demand an immediate and thorough response to the following concerns:

1. **Accountability and Coordination:** How do you justify the lack of adequate measures to prevent such violent incidents on federal property? What steps are you taking to ensure effective collaboration with law enforcement agencies to enhance security and prevent future occurrences?
2. **Support for Federal Personnel:** What specific actions are you taking to guarantee the safety and protection of USPP officers, who face clear risks while performing their duties?
3. **Strengthening Security:** What immediate measures are you implementing to enhance security and surveillance on federal lands to prevent future violent incidents? The current approach seems woefully insufficient given the recent events.
4. **Policy and Protocol Revisions:** Will you commit to revising Department policies or protocols to better address and prevent violent demonstrations on federal lands? The current policies appear to be failing in their fundamental purpose.

Your lack of response and the recent surge in violence demand urgent and effective action. The American people deserve to know that their federal lands and the personnel who protect them will not suffer neglect or unnecessary endangerment.

I expect a prompt and comprehensive response addressing these critical issues.

Sincerely,


John Barrasso, M.D.
Ranking Member