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**United States Senate**  
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
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JUSTIN J. MEMMOTT, MINORITY STAFF DIRECTOR  
PATRICK J. McCORMICK III, MINORITY CHIEF COUNSEL

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”<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup>

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.”<sup>3</sup>

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the urgent need for improved recruitment and retention efforts within the USPP to address alarming attrition rates, outdated pay scales, and chronic staffing shortages.

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<sup>1</sup> [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)

<sup>2</sup> [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)

<sup>3</sup> [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

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JUSTIN J. MEMMOTT, MINORITY STAFF DIRECTOR  
and MINORITY CHIEF COUNSEL

February 6, 2024

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

Dear Secretary Haaland,

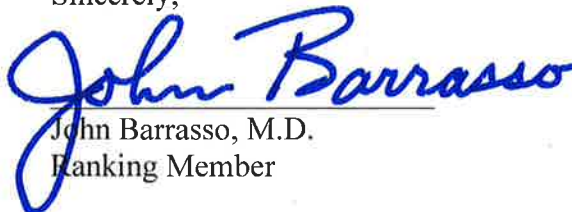
I write to you regarding my concerns about the Department of the Interior's (Department) recruiting and retention efforts for its law enforcement components, most notably within the United States Park Police (USPP). The USPP's attrition rate, its outdated pay scale and ongoing staffing shortages are alarming. In order to restore public trust in the Department's essential law enforcement functions and enhance morale, retention, and recruitment within the Department's law enforcement components, concrete steps need to be taken to address these issues.

Recently, the Chairman of the United States Park Police Fraternal Order of Police, Kenneth Spencer, stated that, "According to the National Park Service, the U.S. Park Police should have a minimum of 432 sworn officers assigned to the Washington Metropolitan Area (DC, VA, MD), but as of this month, we only have 370."<sup>1</sup> He also said that, "We have an average annual attrition rate of 35 officers." According to the Congressional Research Service, the total number of sworn law enforcement officers as of December 2023 is only 20 more than December of 2022.<sup>2</sup> Even if this increase was dispersed across all seven of the Department's law enforcement components, this would do little to address ongoing and chronic staffing shortages. The Department is clearly failing to make necessary recruitment changes and mitigate staffing shortages.

These issues highlight the limited amount of attention the Department of the Interior pays to ensuring its law enforcement programs are fully resourced. Recruitment and retention numbers continue to decline year over year.<sup>3</sup> The Department needs to start developing comprehensive plans to promptly address this problem.

I ask that you respond to the following questions no later than February 22, 2024.

Sincerely,

  
John Barrasso, M.D.  
Ranking Member

<sup>1</sup> [USPPFOP Release on Lincoln Memorial Vandalism.pdf](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Department of the Interior Law Enforcement Programs \(crs.gov\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> [DOI DEIA Strategic Plan - Final \(2022-03-23\)](#)

## Questions

1. Why has the rate of recruitment and retention for USPP officers decreased in the last few years?
2. What steps is the Department of the Interior taking to increase recruitment and retention of its law enforcement officers?
3. Have efforts, such as those guided by President Biden's Executive Order 14074,<sup>4</sup> been measurably successful?
  - a. If so, how? Please provide all relevant statistics showing recruitment and retention numbers both before and after the issuance of the Executive Order.
  - b. Has the Department excluded from consideration any otherwise qualified USPP candidates who are not "representative of communities they are sworn to serve" pursuant to Executive Order 14074?
4. In order to improve recruitment and retention of USPP officers and improve public safety, would you support congressional efforts to restructure Park Police pay scales to match the majority of federal law enforcement agencies?

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<sup>4</sup> Federal Register :: Advancing Effective, Accountable Policing and Criminal Justice Practices To Enhance Public Trust and Public Safety

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JUSTIN J. MEMMOTT, MINORITY STAFF DIRECTOR  
PATRICK J. MCCORMICK III, MINORITY CHIEF COUNSEL

June 13, 2024

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

Dear Secretary Haaland,

I am deeply troubled with last weekend's incidents near the White House involving pro-terror, anti-Israel agitators. These individuals not only vandalized federal property with messages such as "Long live Hamas" and "Muslim 4 Hamas,"<sup>1</sup> but also assaulted U.S. Park Police (USPP) officers<sup>2</sup> and a National Park Service (NPS) ranger.<sup>3</sup> These overt criminal acts, committed on your watch, necessitate your unequivocal condemnation and decisive action to help bring these agitators to justice.

As the Secretary of the Interior, your support of the USPP and National Park Service is paramount to the security of our federal lands. The brazen assaults and subsequent vandalism are stark reminders of the vulnerabilities faced by law enforcement officers and rangers who serve and protect our national treasures. Your strong and immediate response is essential in affirming our national commitment to the rule of law and the safety of our federal personnel and properties.

Disturbingly, police reported no arrests following protesters' clear acts of violence and vandalism, leaving many questions unanswered about the adequacy of the response to this incident.<sup>4</sup> I question whether political sympathy with the agitators influenced your department's response to these acts of violence and vandalism. It is imperative that your department's actions are guided by the principles of law and order, rather than political considerations. The Department of the Interior must do everything within its authority to ensure that these offenders are brought to justice. The American people must have confidence that the Department will apply the law, regardless of the views of the lawbreakers.

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<sup>1</sup> [White House Protesters Vandalized Property and Clashed With Law Enforcement, But Police Say No Arrests Were Made \(freebeacon.com\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Anti-Israel agitators lay siege on Biden White House, trash Lafayette Square while forcing police out \(bizpacreview.com\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> [\(3\) Christian Julio Lasval on X: "After vandalizing the General Rochambeau Statue outside the North Front of the White House, a lone National Park Service Ranger stands alone, being accosted by the vandals in an attempt to prevent further vandalism. https://t.co/LL2WqZiSQN" / X \(twitter.com\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> [White House Protesters Vandalized Property and Clashed With Law Enforcement, But Police Say No Arrests Were Made \(freebeacon.com\)](#)

Given the gravity of this situation, I expect immediate answers and actions regarding the following:

1. **Collaboration with Law Enforcement:** How is the Department coordinating with local and federal law enforcement agencies to identify, apprehend, and bring to justice the individuals responsible for the assaults on federal personnel and the vandalism of federal property?
2. **Support for USPP and NPS Rangers:** What concrete measures is the Department implementing to ensure the safety and well-being of USPP officers and NPS rangers who are at the forefront of protecting our national parks, federal lands, and monuments?
3. **Enhanced Security Measures:** What specific and immediate steps is the Department of the Interior taking to bolster security and surveillance on NPS lands to prevent such violent incidents in the future?
4. **Policy Revisions:** Is the Department planning to revise its policies or protocols to better manage and prevent violent demonstrations on federal lands in the future?

I look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,

  
John Barrasso, M.D.  
Ranking Member