

Chairwoman Amy Klobuchar
Opening Statement (as delivered)
Oversight of the U.S. Capitol Police Following the
January 6th Attack on the Capitol
June 16, 2021

Good afternoon. I call to order this hearing of the Rules and Administration Committee on “Oversight of the U.S. Capitol Police following the January 6th Attack on the Capitol.” I would like to thank Ranking Member Blunt, and our colleagues, and of course, our witness the Inspector General for the Capitol Police, Mr. Michael Bolton, thank you for being here and we appreciate the recommendations and the work that you’ve done in this area as well.

We are here today just over a week after releasing our bipartisan joint report with the Homeland Security Committee that focuses on the security, planning, and response failures related to the violent and unprecedented insurrection at the Capitol on January 6th.

We all remember the haunting words of an officer on the radio that day asking, “Does anyone have a plan?” Does anyone have a plan? The answer, sadly, that day, was no.

Our report lays out not only key findings, but important recommendations with needed changes to prevent anything similar from happening again – and to ensure that in the future, there is a plan.

I continue to support a January 6th independent 9/11 style commission to look at the larger causes of the insurrection, as well as the rise of domestic extremism. These issues greatly contributed and caused what happened at the Capitol that day. But the focus of this committee combined with the Homeland Security Committee -- which actually allowed us to extend our jurisdiction and look at more things even outside of the Capitol Police because we did it with Homeland Security, which included looking at the role of the Defense Department decisions as well as the FBI and Homeland Security and the like -- our focus was on what happened that day and what we can do to make sure it doesn’t happen again.

We believe that we should not wait to implement changes that can be made immediately, and today’s hearing on oversight of Capitol Police practices and procedures is an important step as we look at reforms that should be put in place without delay. Toward that end, we are glad that Mr. Bolton is here to discuss his work and perspective on the major issues facing the Department.

Since January 6th, Mr. Bolton has issued four flash reports looking into the breakdowns and failures in the lead-up to and on that day. These Inspector General reports, which covered topics

including intelligence, operational planning, the Civil Disturbance Unit, and threat assessment, have expanded our understanding of what happened that day.

These reports also identify changes that are needed with the practices and procedures of Capitol Police leadership – especially as the confidence of rank and file officers has been seriously undermined. Many of Mr. Bolton’s recommendations identify reforms and we also put those reforms together as part of our joint report.

Based on what we have found, I want to focus today on the major changes facing the Department, as well as the changes that are needed both to restore trust and ensure the security of the Capitol complex.

First are the intelligence failures, which greatly contributed to the breakdowns we saw on January 6th and left frontline officers unprepared for what they faced that day.

We know that the three intelligence-related units within the Capitol Police knew about social media posts calling for violence at the Capitol, but that the full scope of these warnings never made it to the Capitol Police leadership, rank-and-file officers, or law enforcement partners.

There were also conflicting reports on the threats. One Capitol Police intelligence assessment on January 3rd warned that the Capitol could be a target, but a January 6th daily intelligence report called the likelihood of violence “remote” to “improbable.”

Second, we know that there was a major issue with a lack of equipment – 75 percent, 75 percent, of the officers on duty that day were forced to defend the Capitol in their regular uniforms.

Some of the equipment issued that day was old, or had degraded due to improper storage, as was the case with some of the protective shields distributed that had been stored at the wrong temperature -- making them shatter on impact. Just imagine being a police officer, you’re given a shield, and it shatters on impact. In another instance, officers could not access the gear that they needed because it was locked on a bus.

Third, we know that there was an issue with training – that less than 10 percent of the officers responding that day had any advanced civil disturbance training, and many officers hadn’t received any civil disturbance training since their initial Recruit Officer Class training.

And fourth, we know that there was no comprehensive department-wide operational plan from leadership in advance of January 6th, which resulted in confusion and a lack of communication that placed frontline officers in peril.

We know that incident commanders, who could have provided better communication to officers, ended up being unavailable as they fought with rioters themselves because there had not been better preparation.

And we know that there was no plan to deploy the National Guard if things escalated to a point where they were needed, and there was a delay in getting the required approval from members of the Capitol Police Board to request immediate National Guard support – an issue that I am introducing legislation to address with Ranking Member Blunt, and we will be doing that very soon.

These failures resulted in an unnecessary delay in the arrival of National Guard troops to assist in defending the Capitol from an armed insurrection. The Guard should have been, of course, called in before this started as the intelligence was gathered and there should have been a plan to use the Guard, but even that day, they could have been called in sooner.

There is a lot to get through today and, Mr. Bolton, I look forward to hearing your testimony. And with that, I want to recognize Ranking Member Blunt for his opening statement.

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