

**Testimony
of
William J. Walker
Commanding General
District of Columbia National Guard
before
Senate Homeland Security and
Governmental Affairs Committee and Senate Rules
and Administration Committee
3 MAR 21**

Good morning, Chairman Peters and Chairwoman Klobuchar, Ranking Members Portman and Blunt, and members of the Committees. I am Major General William J. Walker and I serve as the Commanding General for the District of Columbia National Guard, affectionately known as the Capital Guardians. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the events of January 6 - a dark chapter in our nation's history.

I was sickened by the violence and destruction I witnessed that fateful day and the physical and mental harm that came to the U.S. Capitol Police officers and MPD, some of whom I met with later that evening and I could see the injuries they sustained. It is my hope that my recollection of events and presentation of the facts as I know them, will help your Committees in its investigation and prevent such tragic events from ever occurring again.

First, I think it is critical to understand what the DC National Guard's mission was on January 6th, to include what civilian agency we were supporting and how requests for support of other civilian authorities were handled.

On December 31, 2020, the DC National Guard received written requests from District of Columbia Mayor, Muriel Bowser, and her Director of DC Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency, Dr. Christopher Rodriguez. The requests sought DC National Guard support for traffic control and crowd management for planned demonstrations in DC from January 5th thru the 6th.

After conducting mission analysis to support the District request, I sent a letter to then Secretary of the Army, Ryan McCarthy, dated January 1, requesting approval. I received approval in a letter dated January 5th from Secretary McCarthy granting support of the MPD with 340 total personnel to include 40 personnel assigned to a Quick Reaction Force.

The DCNG provides support to MPD, the U.S. Park Police, U.S. Secret Service and other District and federal law enforcement agencies in response to planned rallies, marches, protests and other large scale first amendment activity on a routine basis.

A standard component of such support is the stand up of an offsite Quick Reaction Force (QRF), an element of guardsmen held in reserve equipped with civil disturbance response equipment (helmets, shields, batons, etc..) and postured to quickly respond to an urgent and immediate need for assistance by civilian authorities. The Secretary of the Army's Jan. 5th letter withheld authority for me to employ the Quick Reaction Force.

In addition, the Secretary of the Army's memorandum to me required that a "concept of operation" (CONOP) be submitted to him before any employment of the QRF. I found that requirement to be unusual as was the requirement to seek approval to move Guardsmen supporting MPD to move from one traffic control point to another.

Beginning at 1:30pm, we watched as MPD began to deploy all available resources in support of the Capitol Police. In doing so, the officers began to withdraw from the traffic control points that were jointly manned with DC Guardsmen.

At 1:49pm I received a frantic call from then Chief of U.S. Capitol Police, Steven Sund, where he informed me that the security perimeter at the Capitol had been breached by hostile rioters. Chief Sund, his voice cracking with emotion, indicated that there was a dire emergency on Capitol Hill and requested the immediate assistance of as many Guardsmen as I could muster.

Immediately after the 1:49pm call with Chief Sund, I alerted the Army Senior Leadership of the request. The approval for Chief Sund's request would

eventually come from the Acting Secretary of Defense and be relayed to me by Army Senior Leaders at 5:08pm – 3 hours and 19 minutes later. We already had Guardsmen on buses ready to move to the Capitol. Consequently, at 5:20pm (in under 20 minutes) the District of Columbia National Guard arrived at the Capitol. We helped to re-establish the security perimeter at the east side of the Capitol to facilitate the resumption of the Joint Session of Congress.

In conclusion, I am grateful for the Guardsmen from the 53 states and territories who supported DC National Guard's OPERATION CAPITOL RESPONSE and ensured a peaceful transition of power on January 20th. In particular, I am grateful for the timely assistance of our close neighbors from the Virginia, Delaware, and Maryland National Guard who augmented our DC National Guard forces in establishing a security perimeter.

I am honored to lead these citizen Soldiers and Airmen – your constituents - many of whom have left behind their families, careers, education and businesses, to ensure the protection and safety of the U.S. Capitol and those who serve in it.

Thank you again for the opportunity to brief you today. I look forward to any questions you may have.

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