

February 1, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House of Representatives
1236 Longworth H.O.B.
Washington D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi:

This week will mark one month since the violent attack on the U.S. Capitol. Tomorrow, the United States Capitol Police will honor Officer Brian Sicknick, who made the ultimate sacrifice as a result of his efforts to defend democracy on January 6, 2021. Although I have not yet had the opportunity to answer your questions or those of any Congressional committees since the events of January 6, I wanted to reach out to you to provide first-hand information regarding the actions that were taken, by myself and the United States Capitol Police (USCP), in preparation for the Joint Session of Congress and the planned demonstrations for that day. There has been much conflicting information presented by various officials and the media regarding the preparations and actions taken at the Capitol that day, and I would like to set the record straight from my perspective.

While the violent attack that took place was unspeakable, and those responsible for this violent insurrection should be held accountable, I am proud of the men and women of the U.S. Capitol Police, the vast majority of whom fought valiantly and risked their lives to protect Members of Congress, their staff, and the Capitol building. Perfect hindsight does not change the fact that nothing in our collective experience or our intelligence – including intelligence provided by FBI, Secret Service, Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and D.C. Metropolitan Police (MPD) – indicated that a well-coordinated, armed assault on the Capitol might occur on January 6. Having previously handled two major post-election demonstrations successfully utilizing an action plan that was based on intelligence assessments that had proven to be credible, reliable, and accurate, we reasonably assumed the intelligence assessment for January 6, 2021, was also correct.

I have been in law enforcement for almost 30 years, the majority of that time working in special operations. During my almost three decades in policing, I have planned multiple presidential inaugurations, dozens of National Special Security Events (NSSE), and a number of other special events, many of which included volatile protests and various levels of civil disobedience. Suffice it to say that I have never seen anything like the violent insurrection we witnessed on January 6.

After the election on November 3, there were other large protests planned by pro-Trump supporters: one on November 14 (MAGA I) and one on December 12 (MAGA II), both of which were located at the Supreme Court building and adjacent Capitol grounds, and involved thousands of people. We handled both of those events successfully, utilizing an action plan that was based on intelligence assessments developed by us and our partner agencies. The USCP Intelligence and Inter-Agency Coordination Division (IICD) prepared intelligence assessments for both of these

events that indicated that various extremist groups were expected to attend the events and that there was a likelihood of violence. Based on the intelligence, the action plan included: coordination with our law enforcement partners, development of a staffing and Civil Disturbance Unit (CDU) plan, coordination with the Congressional community, enhanced protective actions for Members of Congress, and the deployment of physical crowd management devices that consisted of steel crowd control barriers. During those two protests, there was a limited amount of violence and/or injuries to officers, and a limited number of arrests.

As we prepared for the third protest, we understood that the focus of the protests would be the Capitol itself, and not the Supreme Court as in the previous two demonstrations, and that we could expect the crowd to be somewhat different in size and risk. As is standard practice, our IICD hosted a number of internal briefings and published intelligence assessments of the event, the most recent being published on January 3, 2021, three days before the event. The IICD reports include input from internal U.S. Capitol Police intelligence officials, such as our Director of Intelligence John Donahue, who is an expert in right-wing extremism, as well as information provided by our partner agencies such as the FBI, U.S. Secret Service, Department of Homeland Security, and the D.C. Metropolitan Police.

As previously mentioned, the IICD intelligence assessment indicated that the January 6th protests/rallies were “expected to be similar to the previous Million MAGA March rallies in November and December 2020, which drew tens of thousands of participants.” The assessment indicated that members of the Proud Boys, white supremacist groups, Antifa, and other extremist groups were expected to participate in the January 6th event and that they may be inclined to become violent. This was very similar to the intelligence assessment of the December 12, 2020, MAGA II event. In addition, on Monday, January 4, 2021, the USCP IICD published the Daily Intelligence Report which provided an assessment of all of the groups expected to demonstrate on January 6, 2021. The IICD Daily Intelligence Report assessed “the level of probability of acts of civil disobedience/arrests occurring based on current intelligence information,” as “Remote” to “Improbable” for all of the groups expected to demonstrate on Wednesday, January 6, 2021. In addition, the Daily Intelligence report indicated that “The Secretary of Homeland Security has not issued an elevated or imminent alert at this time....”

At no time during the previous MAGA I or MAGA II events did the crowd attempt to storm or attack the Supreme Court building, or the adjacent Capitol building, and based upon all available intelligence, nothing of that sort was expected to happen on January 6. The USCP has successfully managed numerous large-scale protests where demonstrators have conducted illegal (based on location) and contentious demonstrations on the Capitol grounds and even on its steps. Based upon our experience with the prior post-election demonstrations, our ongoing intelligence assessment and briefings, and the input from our law enforcement partners over the course of many weeks, we developed and implemented a security plan for the January 6 Joint Session of Congress. The USCP implemented a number of enhancements to our planning for January 6, 2021, based on the intelligence that we had.

In preparation for the Joint Session of Congress, I directed that the Department be placed into an “all hands on deck” status, meaning every available sworn employee with police powers would be working. We activated the largest number of CDU platoons possible while still

supporting the Joint Session of Congress. This allowed for the activation of approximately seven CDU platoons (approximately 250 officers), with approximately four platoons being available in “hard” gear -- helmets, protective clothing, and shields. While limited by budgetary and training restraints imposed on USCP, the planned number of CDU officers had always sufficed for large demonstrations on Capitol Hill prior to January 6th. In addition, we activated civilian support for January 6 to include enhanced access to the property management division, in the event officers needed replacement uniforms or equipment, and vehicle services.

Although we had ordered a large shipment of riot helmets for our officers for the Inauguration, we pushed for expedited delivery and approximately 104 of the helmets were delivered on Monday, January 4. We developed contingency plans in the event that we had armed individuals in the crowd. In addition, we coordinated coverage for the event with the District of Columbia Fire and Emergency Medical Service. I directed that additional Tactical Combat Casualty Care (TCCC) kits be available in the field if needed. TCCC is specialized training and equipment that prepares officers in the field to implement emergency life-saving care to stop victims from bleeding to death as the result of a gunshot wound or injury. During my time with the USCP, I have authorized officers to carry the TCCC kits and for all new recruits to be trained in TCCC emergency medical care.

On January 2, 2021, I contacted MPD Chief Robert Contee to discuss support if necessary for January 6th. On the morning of January 6th, MPD Assistant Chief Jeffery Carroll and I exchanged information regarding our designated CDU Incident Command (IC). This was done in an effort to facilitate immediate command and control of assets if requested. As a result of this advanced coordination, MPD had pre-staged significant CDU resources on the north side of the Capitol.

Well before the planned demonstration, I worked with USCP Assistant Chief Thomas, Assistant Chief Pittman, and her Security Services Bureau to develop an expanded perimeter barrier plan. The expanded perimeter was based on the concern for First Amendment activity focused on the Capitol and the large number of people expected. Both the House and Senate Sergeants at Arms approved the expanded perimeter plan. It was the heightened tensions related to the certification of the vote, and the expanded perimeter that made me believe that National Guard assistance might be necessary.

On Monday, January 4, I approached the two Sergeants at Arms to request the assistance of the National Guard, as I had no authority to do so without an Emergency Declaration by the Capitol Police Board (CPB). My regular interactions with the CPB, outside of our monthly meetings regarding law enforcement matters, were conducted with the House and Senate Sergeant at Arms, the two members of the CPB who have law enforcement experience. I first spoke with the House Sergeant at Arms to request the National Guard. Mr. Irving stated that he was concerned about the “optics” and didn’t feel that the intelligence supported it. He referred me to the Senate Sergeant at Arms (who is currently the Chair of the CPB) to get his thoughts on the request. I then spoke to Mr. Stenger and again requested the National Guard. Instead of approving the use of the National Guard, however, Mr. Stenger suggested I ask them how quickly we could get support if needed and to “lean forward” in case we had to request assistance on January 6.

At Mr. Stenger's direction, I called General William Walker, commanding officer of the D.C. National Guard. I advised that I had not received CPB approval, but wanted to know how many National Guard he could provide and how fast could he provide them if they were needed on Capitol Hill on January 6. He advised that he could repurpose 125 National Guard and have them to me fairly quickly, once approved. I asked General Walker to be prepared in the event that we requested them.

On Tuesday, January 5, I hosted a virtual meeting with my Executive Team, all three principals of the Capitol Police Board, and a dozen of the top law enforcement and military officials from D.C., including the FBI, the U.S. Secret Service, and the National Guard. This meeting focused on both the January 6 event, and the upcoming Presidential Inauguration on January 20. During the meeting, no entity, including the FBI, provided any intelligence indicating that there would be a coordinated violent attack on the United States Capitol by thousands of well-equipped armed insurrectionists. In fact, all present at the meeting indicated that there was no new intelligence to report for January 6. At no time did the Department of Homeland Security issue a threat advisory bulletin in reference to violent extremists planning a coordinated, violent attack on the U.S. Capitol. It should also be noted that the U.S. Secret Service planned to and did escort the Vice President of the United States to the Capitol on January 6, which it obviously would not have done if it believed there to be a threat of a violent insurrection at the Capitol building and on its grounds.

In the days leading up to January 6, we briefed a number of Members of Congress who had requested an advance briefing on our security plan and the permitted demonstration activity scheduled for January 6, 2021. The members that were briefed in advance include: Chairman Blunt, Chairperson Lofgren, Chairman Ryan, and Representative Waters. We informed these members of the expectation of protests, current permitted First Amendment activity on Capitol grounds, our response planning efforts and established perimeter, as well as enhanced Member security initiatives such as increased checks on residences and the ability of the USCP to respond off Capitol grounds to assist Members safely getting to the Capitol if needed. Contrary to some allegations made to the media, I did not at any time misrepresent any facts to Members. This was an accurate reporting of our intelligence and threat assessment at the time.

Lastly, in preparation for the event I sent an email to the USCP Assistant Chiefs and Deputy Chiefs on the evening of Tuesday, January 5, directing them to ensure that all roll calls and officers were fully briefed on what to expect during their shifts -- a long day, large groups, and clashes that could possibly include violence.

On Wednesday, January 6, at approximately 7:15 a.m., as I was driving into work, I called MPD Inspector Robert Glover to inquire about the crowds he was seeing for the event, which was beginning at the Ellipse. Inspector Glover stated that there were already lines to get into the event, but that the crowd was compliant and he did not observe any concerning issues. I then checked in at the USCP Command Center where I would be for the event. I arrived at the Command Center, where I remained to monitor the activity on the National Mall and the Ellipse. I sat at the center console with Assistant Chiefs Pittman and Thomas nearby.

We were monitoring the actions and demeanor of the crowd, which at the time did not raise any concerns, when we received word at 12:52 p.m. that a pipe bomb had been located at the Republican National Committee headquarters, immediately adjacent to Capitol Grounds. We responded immediately to coordinate and send resources to the scene, including a number of officers, officials, and a bomb squad. We also dispatched resources to look for other explosive devices, suspects, and vehicles. At almost the exactly same time, we observed a large group of individuals approaching the West Front of the Capitol.

When the group arrived at the perimeter, they did not act like any group of protestors I had ever seen. Unlike other heated protests, these protestors did not simply congregate to angrily voice their grievances. As soon as this group arrived at our perimeter, they immediately began to fight violently with the officers and to tear apart the steel crowd control barriers, using them to assault the officers. It was immediately clear that their primary goal was to defeat our perimeter as quickly as possible and to get past the police line. This mob was like nothing I have seen in my law enforcement career. The group consisted of thousands of well-coordinated, well-equipped violent criminals. They had weapons, chemical munitions, protective equipment, explosives, and climbing gear. A number of them were wearing radio ear pieces indicating a high level of coordination.

Given these factors, it was clear to me at 1:00 p.m. that the situation was deteriorating rapidly. I called MPD and requested assistance and they responded immediately. I also requested assistance from the U.S. Secret Service Uniformed Division and other law enforcement agencies. I notified the two Sergeant at Arms by 1:09 p.m. that I urgently needed support and asked them to declare a State of Emergency and authorize the National Guard. I was advised by Mr. Irving that he needed to run it up the chain of command. I continued to follow up with Mr. Irving, who was with Mr. Stenger at the time, and he advised that he was waiting to hear back from congressional leadership, but expected authorization at any moment. At approximately 1:50 p.m., not yet having authorization from CPB, and noting the extreme urgency of the situation, I notified General William Walker that I should have approval shortly and that we had an urgent request for the National Guard. At 2:10 p.m., I finally received notification from Mr. Irving that the CPB authorized me to request the National Guard. However, as explained below, I soon learned that our request would also need to be approved by the Department of Defense.

Meanwhile, at approximately 1:50 p.m., USCP resources dispatched to look for other possible explosives located another pipe bomb at the Democratic National Committee headquarters, as well as a vehicle with explosives and a weapon, all within close proximity of the Capitol Grounds. As a result of these explosive devices, extensive USCP resources were dispatched to the scenes, and two congressional office buildings had to be evacuated. I believe all of this was part of a coordinated plan related to the attack on the Capitol.

At 1:51 p.m., I activated the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments Mutual Aid Agreement, requesting assistance from law enforcement agencies from the National Capital Region (NCR). As a result of this request for law enforcement assistance, we had over 1,700 officers from 18 law enforcement agencies respond to assist the USCP. I worked closely with Assistant Chief Thomas and Deputy Chief Pickett to establish resource management to account for and deploy the officers from the responding agencies in the most effective and efficient manner.

We also established priorities for the responding officers, which included: (1) securing the perimeter and foundation of the Capitol; and (2) assisting the USCP in removing unauthorized persons from the Capitol and conducting a top to bottom sweep of the building to ensure no unauthorized persons, or hazardous devices remained in the building. These goals were implemented as quickly as was possible in order to facilitate the safe and expeditious return of the Members of Congress to complete their certification of the electoral votes.

In the Command Center, I could see that the USCP and MPD officers were fighting with all they had to protect the Capitol building. I saw officers hit with pipes, wooden sticks, flag poles, and sprayed with mace and bear spray, all while trying to defend themselves against projectiles being directed at them. The mob was violently and ruthlessly attacking law enforcement officers in an effort to breach their lines. The officers fought courageously against the violent attackers for over an hour before any individuals in the mob were able to breach the Capitol Building. At some entrances to the Capitol, law enforcement fought with the mob for hours to prevent them from accessing the building.

As the crowd was attempting to breach the building, our Dignitary Protection Division teams prepared to evacuate congressional leadership. USCP assigned to the House and Senate Chambers, secured the two locations. As the crowds breached the building, USCP attempted to secure the hallways and prevent the mob from advancing further into the building. The USCP initiated evacuations of the two Chambers and USCP officers began to move Members of Congress to safe locations.

At approximately 2:28 p.m., I learned that in order to get authorization for National Guard support, the Pentagon needed to approve the request. I was therefore asked to participate in a conference call with Dr. Chris Rodriguez, D.C. Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency; Chief Robert Contee, Metropolitan Police; General William Walker, D.C. National Guard; and Lt. General Walter Piatt, the Director of Army Staff. During the call I again made an urgent request for immediate National Guard support. I explained that the National Guard was needed to shore up our perimeter to help secure the Capitol. Lt. General Walter Piatt stated, "I don't like the visual of the National Guard standing a line with the Capitol in the background. I would much rather prefer to relieve USCP officers from other posts so they can handle the protestors." I urgently advised that this was not an option and that I did not have officers to swap with National Guard and that I needed assistance immediately. Lt. General Piatt stated that he was preparing to brief the Secretary of the Army and that his recommendation would be not to support the request. Chief Contee then stated, "So you are denying the request from the Capitol Police." Chief Contee then asked me, "Steve, are you requesting National Guard assistance?" to which I stated, "Yes, I need immediate assistance with National Guard at the Capitol, I do not have the option to swap out officers on check points." Lt. General Piatt then indicated that he was going to run the request up the chain of command at the Pentagon.

Almost two hours later, by 4:00 p.m., we had still not received authorization from the Pentagon to activate the National Guard. Mr. Stenger offered to have Senator McConnell call the Secretary of the Army to expedite the request. I concurred that this would be a good idea. I followed up approximately 20 minutes later to check on the call and express the need for leadership

to call to assist in expediting the request. The first 150 members of the National Guard were not sworn in on Capitol grounds until 5:40 p.m., four and a half hours after I first requested them and three and a half hours after my request was approved by the Capitol Police Board. I still cannot fathom why in the midst of an armed insurrection, which was broadcast worldwide on television, it took the Department of Defense over three hours to approve an urgent request for National Guard support.

By late afternoon we were able to re-establish our perimeter with the assistance of MPD and the responding law enforcement agencies. We then methodically cleared the building, establishing the security of both the building and the House and Senate chambers. At 5:36 p.m., I briefed Vice President Pence on the current security posture, after which he initiated a call with you, Speaker Pelosi, and I advised you both that the Chambers could be safely re-occupied by 7:30 p.m. I also participated in a conference call at approximately 6:25 p.m. with Congressional leadership that included you, Senator Schumer, Senator McConnell, and Representative Clyburn. During that call I briefed the group on the current security posture of the Capitol and the ability of the House and the Senate to reconvene in their respective chambers and complete the certification of the Electoral College votes with the Vice President. Senate leadership decided to reconvene at 8:00 p.m. and House leadership at 9:00 p.m.

What occurred on January 6th cannot be considered under any circumstances a protest, a rally, or civil disobedience. This was a well-planned, coordinated, armed insurrection at the United States Capitol. The USCP does not have the manpower, the training, or the capabilities to handle an armed insurrection involving thousands of individuals bent on violence and destruction at all costs. Nevertheless, because of their bravery and professionalism in the face of this attack, USCP officers prevented the mob's actions from resulting in more bloodshed, and carried out their mission to protect the Members of Congress and the legislative process. Contrary to what others have said, the USCP did not fail. There are many heroic stories of USCP officers that day that helped to ensure the safety of the Members of Congress, including two officers who lost their lives. Democracy prevailed on January 6, 2021, in large part because of the courageous actions of the United States Capitol Police.

This does not mean we should not look at this day and identify areas for improvement. With the benefit of hindsight, I acknowledge that a number of systems broke down, all of which can be rectified with more resources, better training, updated policies, and accountability. Officials or officers who violated policies or directives, or even their oath, need to be held accountable. I also wish we had had better intelligence and warnings as to the possibility of this type of military style armed insurrection. The entire intelligence community seems to have missed this. In addition, this incident has demonstrated that going forward, the USCP needs more unilateral authority to implement its security planning and the ability to call in National Guard support when needed. Steps need to be taken to ensure National Guard's ability to support the USCP is seamless in the future. Given this new concerning shift in the threats facing the United States Capitol and its Members, Congress needs to seriously consider the physical security of the Campus, and other security protocols. Every aspect of planning for such an event in the nation's capital, and likely elsewhere, must be reconsidered anew.

Finally, I must add that I wish that before placing the blame on the USCP and on me as the Chief for the breach of the Capitol by an insurrectionist mob, more consideration would have been given to the impact of incomplete information provided by intelligence assessments, the denied National Guard request, and the subsequent delayed approval for National Guard assistance. Again, I do not believe that the U.S. Capitol Police failed. Greatly outnumbered and against tremendous odds, they kept the Members safe. I truly regret my early departure from an agency and a mission I so cherished. Working with the women and men of the USCP, sworn and civilian, and serving the congressional community, was the highlight of my 30 year law enforcement career.

Please feel free to contact me. I will do anything I can, and everything that is requested of me, to help ensure that an attack like January 6, 2021, never happens again. I stand ready, willing and able to assist in any effort.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sund', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Steven A. Sund
Former Chief of Police
United States Capitol Police

CC: The Honorable Steny Hoyer
The United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
The United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
The United States Senate

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
The United States Senate