

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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DOJ OIG Releases Report on DOJ's Response to Protest Activity and Civil Unrest in Washington, D.C. in Late May and Early June 2020, Including at Lafayette Park

Department of Justice (DOJ) Inspector General Michael E. Horowitz announced today the release of a report reviewing DOJ's response to protest activity and civil unrest in Washington, D.C. in late May and early June 2020, following the murder of George Floyd on May 25. The report describes the relevant events involving DOJ and its components, including their assistance to the U.S. Park Police (USPP) and the U.S. Secret Service (USSS) in and around Lafayette Park, meetings attended by then Attorney General (AG) William Barr and other DOJ officials at the White House on June 1, AG Barr's involvement in the events at Lafayette Park on June 1, and DOJ's deployment of its law enforcement personnel on June 1 and on subsequent days.

The DOJ Office of the Inspector General (OIG) found the following regarding the Department's overall response to the protest activity and civil unrest in Washington, D.C.:

- **DOJ's Command and Control Over Its Personnel Was at Times Chaotic and Disorganized.** Multiple witnesses described AG Barr throughout this time period as being involved in making deployment decisions typically made by component officials, which at times resulted in DOJ's and DOJ components' standard practices and procedures being set aside with detrimental effects. Witnesses described being unsure who was in charge or making decisions.
- **In Several Instances, DOJ Law Enforcement Personnel Were Deployed to Situations for Which They Were Not Trained or Equipped.** For example, at 5:00 p.m. on June 1, AG Barr's Chief of Staff sent an email directing Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) personnel to deploy to the White House immediately, but BOP staff received no guidance about their mission or rules of engagement and thus arrived at Lafayette Park without needed equipment. In addition, the OIG found that FBI deployments on June 1 and June 3—including an FBI-coordinated operation on June 3 to form a security perimeter north of Lafayette Park encompassing St. John's Church at AG Barr's direction—lacked adequate planning, failed to provide sufficient guidance to personnel regarding their mission and legal authorities, and, by sending armed agents to respond to civil unrest for which they lacked the proper training or equipment, created safety and security risks for the agents and the public.
- **BOP Deployed Personnel Without Vests or Jackets Clearly Identifying Them as BOP Law Enforcement Personnel.** We determined that the lack of such identifying markings was due to the fact that BOP does not traditionally deploy personnel in a public-facing role outside the prison setting.

The OIG report agreed with the serious concerns expressed to the OIG by law enforcement personnel about DOJ leadership's decision to put DOJ law enforcement agents and elite tactical units in close proximity to the public and requiring them to perform missions for which they lacked the proper equipment and training. While the report recognized that the civil unrest following George Floyd's murder was a highly unusual situation that presented significant challenges that the

Department did not typically face, it noted that ensuring the safety of its personnel and the public should remain its utmost priority.

Regarding the operation to clear protesters from Lafayette Park and the surrounding area on June 1, the OIG found the following:

- **The USPP and the USSS Were in Overall Operational Command at Lafayette Park on June 1.** The USPP and the USSS were in overall operational command of the law enforcement operation to clear protesters that occurred at Lafayette Park on June 1. Personnel from three DOJ law enforcement components—the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), the BOP, and the U.S. Marshals Service (USMS)—were deployed to Lafayette Park on June 1 to assist the USPP and USSS. They did so under the direction of the USPP and USSS unified command, with ATF, BOP, and USMS supervisors leading their respective teams.
- **The USPP Incident Commander Made the Decision to Begin the Clearing Operation. AG Barr’s Presence Did Not Affect the Timing of the Operation.** The OIG determined that the USPP and USSS unified command had already decided to initiate the operation to clear protesters from the area and had begun preparations to do so prior to AG Barr’s arrival in the park. This determination was based on time-stamped Metropolitan Police Department radio communications, contemporaneous written communications, and witness testimony showing that prior to AG Barr’s arrival, the USPP incident commander had already briefed the plan for the clearing operation and drafted the warnings, USPP and USSS personnel had started to put on their gear and line up in preparation for the clearing operation, and the USPP had informed other law enforcement agencies that the operation would begin shortly. Additionally, witnesses who were present for a conversation that AG Barr had with a USPP official shortly before the clearing operation began told us that AG Barr did not order the operation to begin or that the timeline be moved up.
- **A June 2 Statement by the DOJ Director of Public Affairs that AG Barr Had Told Law Enforcement Officials at Lafayette Park to “[G]et It Done” Was Inaccurate.** Witnesses told us they did not hear AG Barr make such a statement, and we concluded that the statement gave the inaccurate impression that AG Barr had personally ordered the clearing operation, leading to significant public confusion about AG Barr’s involvement.

Report: Today’s report is available on the DOJ OIG’s website: https://oig.justice.gov/reports/review-department-justices-response-protest-activity-and-civil-unrest-washington-dc-late?utm_source=pressrelease&utm_medium=web&utm_campaign=report

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