



**UNITED STATES PARK POLICE
FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE**

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Testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives

Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies

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Thank you, Chairman Calvert, Ranking Member Moran and Subcommittee Members for the opportunity to testify today. I am Ian Glick, a police officer for the United States Park Police and currently serving as Chairman of the United States Park Police Fraternal Order of Police (FOP). I am here to primarily advocate the critical need to replace one of the U.S. Park Police Aviation Unit's aging helicopters maintained by the National Park Service.

The United States Park Police is one of the oldest uniformed federal law enforcement agencies in the United States, founded in 1791 by President George Washington as the Park Watch for the purpose of protecting federal property in the District of Columbia. It operated as an independent agency until 1849 and is now a part of the National Park Service. The Park Police is one of the few, full service federal law enforcement agencies with both federal and state authority. We serve not only the Washington metropolitan area, but have field offices in New York City and San Francisco. We are also deployed from time to time elsewhere for recovery efforts, such as in New Jersey after tropical storm Sandy as well as in Louisiana after Hurricane Katrina.

A vital and critical unit in the U.S. Park Police is our Aviation Unit. This Unit provides aerial support to U.S. Park Police operations and is located just over a mile away from the U.S. Capitol in Anacostia. The Hanger, known as the "Eagles Nest," houses the U.S. Park Police's three helicopters – Eagle 1, a twin-engine Bell 412 purchased in 1999; Eagle 2, a twin-engine Bell 412, purchased in 1989; and, Eagle 3, a single-engine Bell 206L, purchased in 1983.

The operational life of a helicopter is measured in how many hours it has been operated. All three U.S. Park Police helicopters have surpassed the DOI replacement benchmark of 5,000 hours by wide margins and their flight readiness and operating safety may soon be compromised. Eagle 1 has approximately 6,400 flight hours; Eagle 2 has close to 9,000 flight hours and Eagle 3 has nearly 10,000 flight hours. Over the past four years, the Aviation Unit has averaged over 1000 missions per year with over 700 hours of flight time per year.

The Aviation Unit is the only fully functional, multi-jurisdictional, multi-mission law enforcement aviation unit in the District of Columbia. It supports the District's Metropolitan Police Department, Maryland State Police Aviation Section, local law enforcement and emergency response agencies in Northern Virginia, U.S. Secret Service, the U.S. Marshals Service, U.S. Capitol Police, the Department of State and other local, state and federal agencies as well as being an integral part of the Maryland Medevac System. The Aviation Unit performs multiple missions, including criminal searches, surveillance, medevacs, search and rescue, escorts for the President and Vice President of the United States and other dignitaries, as well as anti-terrorism missions. It is the only medevac, SWAT, and rescue-capable aircraft in the District of Columbia.

The Aviation Unit also provides air support for demonstrations and public gatherings, such as the annual 4th of July celebrations on the National Mall, and Presidential inauguration; direct video link to joint operations with other federal law enforcement agencies; medevac of visitors in regional parks, including Shenandoah and Great Falls; conservation observation; video link for NPS restoration activities, as occurred with the Washington Monument after the earthquake in 2011. In addition, the unit provides air support for law enforcement activities specific to the Nation's Capital such as clearing Occupy DC from McPherson Square and the horrific shooting at the Navy Yard, last fall.

The Aviation Unit has a wide range of missions due to its unique flight authority within the most restricted airspace in the country coupled with its 7 day a week, 24 hour a day operating schedule. They have an immediate launch capability covering a 50-mile radius of the White House and a depart-time goal of five minutes. To meet these response standards, along with its 24/7/365 mission readiness, the Aviation Unit depends on having two mission capable helicopters. Both Eagle 1 and Eagle 2 are twin-engine helicopters (Bell 412s) whereas Eagle 3 is a single-engine aircraft, used primarily for pilot training and flight time.

I want to highlight the importance of having two fully mission capable twin-engine helicopters available. These helicopters often undertake very precarious missions, such as low altitude rescues over water or difficult terrain. A single-engine helicopter is unsafe in these conditions and cannot provide the torque and lift necessary to hover and orbit for long periods of time. The Park Police helicopters also operate in hazardous conditions where they may encounter armed individuals. A single-engine helicopter is far more vulnerable to a small arms attack. The tragedy at the Navy Yard last fall is an example of the hazardous missions performed by the US Park Police Aviation Unit where they flew into a live fire zone to load wounded civilians for transport to a hospital as well as to insert SWAT officers into the hot zone. A Bell 412 can transport up to four patients, in differing arrangement of advanced life support and basic life support. Finally, only helicopters with twin-engines may transport cabinet members and operate over restricted, critical areas of Washington D.C., such as the White House, Capitol, and the National Mall.

In addition to the hundreds of lives saved in its 40 year history, some of the more prominent missions of the Aviation Unit include rescuing passengers from Air Florida flight that crashed in the Potomac River in January of 1982 during a snow storm. The Park Police rescued four of the five

survivors. On July 24, 1998, the Aviation Unit medevac'd two U.S. Capitol Police Officers after a gunman entered the Capitol and opened fire. On September 11, 2001, both Eagle 1 and Eagle 2 responded to the attack at the Pentagon to transport wounded civilians to local hospitals as well as provide onsite triage. Eagle 1 took on the responsibility for air traffic control of Ronald Reagan Airport while airborne and kept watch for an additional hijacked plane as the control tower was being evacuated. The U.S. Park Police Aviation Unit transported dozens of critically injured civilians to trauma centers, which ambulances would have not been able to reach in a timely manner due to blocked roads throughout the local area.

The shooting at the Navy Yard this past Fall further demonstrates the complexity of the missions the Aviation Unit performs to protect our Nation's Capital. The Navy Yard is less than a mile away from the Capitol complex and the initial uncertainty of the gunshots at the Navy Yard prompted officers of the U.S. Park Police to be some of the first on the scene with the Aviation Unit arriving shortly thereafter to offer MEDEVAC and air support and to insert SWAT officers into the hot landing zone. Lives were saved that day due to the brave actions of the Park Police officers and the agency's medevac and air support provided by the Aviation Unit.

I want to take a moment to thank you, Congressman Moran, for your past support of the Aviation Unit and your efforts to encourage the Department of Interior to replace Eagle 2. Along with Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton and members of the Maryland and Virginia delegations, we appreciate your outreach to the Department of Interior regarding this request. In December 2012, Rachel Jacobson, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks, responded to your inquiries that the National Park Service was "determining an optimal replacement strategy for the helicopter fleet," but we have yet to see the National Park Service move forward to replace the helicopter or even propose a plan.

While my members and I understand the current budget limitations, ensuring the continuation of the critical work of the U.S. Park Police Aviation Unit is of the utmost importance, and I do not want to see public safety or the unit's service compromised. I respectfully request that Congress include \$14 million in the National Park Service FY 2015 budget to replace Eagle 2 with a new twin-engine Bell 412 or comparable, mission appropriate helicopter. We strongly oppose any efforts to replace Eagle 2 with a less costly, single-engine helicopter that would not be appropriate for the Aviation Unit's designated missions.

While the distinguished members of this Committee consider the important role of the U.S. Park Police Aviation Unit, I would be remiss if I did not also take the time to bring to your attention two other pressing financial issues impacting this agency.

Since December 2013, the U.S. Park Police has been without a Chief of Police. This lack of permanent and stable leadership impacts the financial operations of this agency. The FOP respectfully asks this Committee to encourage the Secretary of Interior to begin a thorough search for a qualified Chief of Police. The ideal candidate would be someone who represents the ideals of

this agency and the diversity of the people we protect, with an eye towards new thinking, contemporary policing, and fiscal responsibility.

Last, but not least, the U.S. Park Police is grossly understaffed. This critical shortfall of officers needs to be addressed in order for the Park Police to continue its vital missions in the Nation's Capital, New York, and San Francisco. In 1998, prior to 9/11, a study by Booz Allen Hamilton recommended a force of 800 U.S. Park Police personnel. The current headcount remains at approximately 610 sworn personnel, well below the recommended level of 800. This number reflects the National Park Service's continued disregard for financially supporting the primary agency responsible for public safety at our nation's most hallowed icons, the lands around them and the main points of ingress and egress in the national capital region. Any further reduction in the number of officers, either through retirement or job transfers to other agencies, will render the Park Police incapable of performing the law enforcement mission that this body and the American people expect.

I come to you today, not only as the Chairman of the organization representing the rank and file men and women of the U.S. Park Police, but also as one of the dedicated officers who work tirelessly to ensure you, your families, your constituents, and the American people are safe to visit our national treasures.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the members of the U.S. Park Police FOP and I will gladly answer any questions you have.