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**Government of the District of Columbia**



**Metropolitan Police Department**

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Testimony of  
**Robert J. Contee III**  
**Chief of Police**

*The Capitol Insurrection:  
Unexplained Delays and Unanswered Questions*

United States House Committee  
on Oversight and Reform

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Virtual Briefing  
Washington, DC

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Good morning, Chairwoman Maloney, Ranking Member Comer, and members of the Committee. I am Robert J. Contee III, Chief of Police of the Metropolitan Police Department, the primary police force in the District of Columbia. I appreciate this opportunity to brief you on the events of January 6, 2021, a dark day for our country. It is critically important that we – members of Congress, District leaders and residents, and all Americans – find answers to questions about the 6<sup>th</sup>. I will relate to you the facts as we know them at this time, based on the point of view of MPD and the government of the District of Columbia. As with any event with multiple agencies, thousands of people, and almost as many cameras as people, there will inevitably be several perspectives and possibly inconsistencies that will need to be aligned as more information is gathered.

I would like to begin by highlighting a few key facts to ensure the Committees and the audience understand the very different roles of Mayor Muriel Bowser and the District of Columbia, including MPD, and those of Congressional and federal authorities. First, MPD is prohibited from entering the Capitol or its Grounds to patrol, make arrests, or serve warrants without the consent or request of the Capitol Police Board. (2 U.S. Code § 1961) Second, unlike any other jurisdiction in the country, the President of the United States, not the Mayor of the District of Columbia, controls the DC National Guard (DCNG). Any request submitted by the Mayor to mobilize the DCNG must be approved by the President and the scope of the request must be limited to supporting the District's local jurisdiction and authority, which excludes federal entities and property. A request for the Guard assistance at the US Capitol or its associated grounds would have to be made by the US Capitol Police with the consent of the US Department of Defense (DOD).

Third, since Mayor Bowser declared a public health emergency in March 2020, the District of Columbia has not issued permits for any large gatherings. On the morning of January 6<sup>th</sup>, MPD was prepared to support our federal partners with a First Amendment assembly that was held primarily on federal land, while continuing to patrol and respond to calls for service throughout city neighborhoods.

In preparation for the anticipated demonstrations and the possibility of violence on city streets, the Department was fully deployed on 12-hour shifts the week of January 4<sup>th</sup>, with days-off and leave canceled. Our federal partners each had their primary areas of responsibility: the U.S. Secret Service (USSS) was focused on the security of the former President and the White House area, U.S. Park Police (USPP) was focused on the Ellipse and the National Mall, and the U.S. Capitol Police (USCP) had responsibility for the Capitol, including both the building and grounds.

At Mayor Bowser's request, and in advance of the scheduled demonstrations, mutual aid was requested from several area police departments to be on standby in the District, and more than 300 members of the D.C. National Guard were deployed on District streets providing traffic control and other services to allow MPD to support the First Amendment assembly and continue to provide services to DC neighborhoods. What follows is a brief outline of MPD's role in these events.

At about 12:45 p.m., the first of two pipe bombs were found, the first one at the Republican National Committee headquarters. The second pipe bomb was found about 30 minutes later, at the Democratic National Committee headquarters. MPD responded to the scenes for the pipe bombs to assist the Capitol Police. At 12:58 p.m., Chief Sund asked for MPD's assistance to address the growing violent mob at the Capitol. Officers were immediately authorized to deploy to the west front of the Capitol and arrived within minutes.

Our members arrived at a chaotic scene. The violent mob quickly overran protective measures at the Capitol, prior to the arrival of MPD officers at the west front. MPD platoons immediately began working to achieve our objectives:

1. Stop rioters from entering the Capitol building and remove those that were already inside,
2. Secure a perimeter, so that the Capitol could be cleared for lawmakers,
3. Enable Congress to resume their sessions to demonstrate to our country and the world that our democracy was still intact, and
4. Lastly, only once the third objective had been accomplished, begin making arrests of anyone violating the law.

At 2:22 p.m., a call was convened with, among others, myself, leadership of the Capitol Police, the DC National Guard, and the Department of the Army. On this call, the U.S. Capitol Police Chief, made an urgent request for support from the National Guard, due to the dire situation we were facing. In the meantime, by 2:30 p.m. the District had requested additional officers from as far away as New Jersey and issued notice of an emergency citywide curfew beginning at 6 p.m.

The seven hours between the urgent call for help from the Capitol Police to MPD and the resumption of work at 8pm by both houses of Congress will be forever etched in the memories of every law enforcement officer who was on the scene, as it is undoubtedly in the minds of the elected officials, congressional staff, and other Capitol employees who were forced to seek safety behind locked doors. Other harm from this traumatic day will be widely felt but possibly unacknowledged. Law enforcement training neither anticipates nor prepares for hours of hand-to-hand combat. Even brief physical fights are physically and emotionally draining.

In closing, I appreciate the opportunity to highlight the heroism of MPD officers, and all of the law enforcement officers who responded to the Capitol and put their lives on the line to protect the Capitol, Congress, and our democracy. But to ensure the continued safety of the District and its residents, the federal enclave, MPD officers, and others, we must be frank in looking at several critical issues. The federal police forces in DC are reexamining their security protocols given the risks of both foreign and domestic terrorism. As the Chief of the District's municipal police force, I must think about our preparations not only for possible attacks, but the daily impact of the changing operations of our federal partners. As they harden targets in the federal enclave, other buildings in the city under MPD jurisdiction may become more likely targets.

Thank you again for the opportunity to brief you today. I will be happy to answer questions as we try to come to terms with January 6th.