

The Honorable Zoe Lofgren  
Chairperson  
Committee on House Administration  
1309 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515-6157

16 May 2021

Madam Chairperson:

My name is Jeffrey Buchanan and I have been asked to appear as a witness during the House Committee on Administration hearing titled “Oversight of the January 6th Attack: Reforming the Capitol Police and Improving Accountability for the Capitol Police Board.” I served as the deputy leader for the Capitol Attack Review Task Force from mid January until early March this year. I retired as a Lieutenant General in 2019 after a 37 year career in the Army. Though I served in a number of key positions overseas and in the homeland during my career, what brought me to the task force was my experience as the Commanding General of the Military District of Washington from 2013-2015. In that role I led the military forces in the NCR in support of a number of law enforcement agencies, including direct support of the U.S. Capitol Police during National Special Security Events, such as the annual State of the Union Address.

Our Task Force submitted our report and made more than 120 recommendations in early March, 2021. I would like to highlight three areas that I believe your committee would like to discuss: reformation of the Capitol Police Board (CPB), a recommendation for the US Capitol Police (USCP) to shift their focus from law enforcement towards force protection, and the need for a cultural change in the USCP to become a learning organization.

The Capitol Police Board was formed in 1873 and consists of three voting members (the House Sergeant at Arms, the Senate Sergeant at Arms, and the Architect of the Capitol) and one non-voting member (the Chief of the USCP). The CPB’s deliberate processes may work well for routine, non-emergency decisions and guidance, but can be challenged in a crisis as we all saw on January 6th. Our task force recommended changes to USC 1970 and 1974 to enable the Chief of the USCP to initiate movement for augmentation in crisis situations. Under current statutes, the Chief cannot initiate such movement until the CPB votes and declares an emergency. We also recommended that the Chief be empowered to appeal denials of requested augmentation in non-crisis situations to the leadership of both the House and Senate. With sound leadership, I believe that unity of effort is possible, even in a crisis. Unity of command will not be possible unless Congress changes the CPB construct and appoints a single person to be both responsible and accountable for security of the Capitol and the people who work there. Such a change in the construct of the CPB was beyond the scope of our task force, but it is certainly worthy of consideration.

The stated mission of the USCP is to “protect the Congress – its Members, employees, visitors, and facilities – so it can fulfill its constitutional and legislative responsibilities in a safe, secure and open environment.” Given that mission statement, the USCP’s stated purpose is force protection. Our observations and feedback we

received from both Members and staffers, however, was that the USCP actually spends much of its energy on law enforcement tasks. Force protection and law enforcement are not mutually exclusive, but if an officer is spending time and energy on law enforcement tasks that have little to do with force protection, the quality of force protection will eventually erode. I am not arguing that we should ignore or tolerate violations of the law on Capitol grounds, but enforcing the law should not be our overriding purpose unless that enforcement is directly related to protecting Congress. I believe that the USCP should shift its primary focus from law enforcement towards force protection. Such a shift would enable the USCP to better understand evolving threats, predict attacks, and adopt an effective posture before, during, and after crises.

A learning organization is one “skilled at creating, acquiring, and transferring knowledge, and at modifying its behavior to reflect new knowledge and insights.” Regardless of how it gets information, such a group applies what it learns for organizational improvement. In my judgment, the USCP is not a learning organization, but it must become one if it is going to meet evolving challenges. Last year alone, the USCP paid its members for more than 720,000 hours of overtime. Aside from being both inefficient and expensive, all of that overtime effectively prevents training because there are no uncommitted personnel available to train. As a result, the USCP did very little training at the individual, leader, or collective levels for the past several years. It is my understanding that the USCP has still not conducted a series of comprehensive after-action reviews (AARs) in the wake of the 6 January attack. AARs are common practice in the military and most law enforcement agencies and are vital for organizational improvement and individual learning in the aftermath of critical incidents. Without a significant change in the USCP’s culture, one that values training and individual development, along with an honest, self-critical approach to organizational improvement, the USCP will never improve and meet the challenges of the future.

I look forward to your questions.

Jeffrey S. Buchanan  
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