June 8, 2020

The Honorable Mark Lee Greenblatt
Inspector General
U.S. Department of Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Mr. Greenblatt:

The nation watched with horror as the U.S. Park Police and other federal law enforcement agencies violently removed peaceful protesters and journalists from Lafayette Park to clear the way for a staged photo of Donald Trump in front of St. John’s Episcopal Church on June 1, 2020. The Park Police have acknowledged that denying there was any use of tear gas was a mistake and that officers used force to disperse crowds that included “smoke canisters and pepper balls,”¹ and two of officers have been placed on administrative duty as the agency investigates an attack on Australian journalists.² Protesters reported being kicked and punched,³ and the attached photograph shows a Park Police officer chasing a fleeing protester with a baton beyond the boundaries of Lafayette Park.⁴ The Park Police is also a named defendant in a lawsuit alleging that the constitutional rights of protesters were violated by the Trump Administration’s decision to violently clear the park.⁵

I request that the Office of Inspector General (OIG) investigate whether the Park Police’s use of force in Lafayette Park complied with applicable law, regulations and agency guidance, including standards set by the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center. The OIG’s investigation should extend to actions taken by the Park Police and any other Department of Interior law enforcement agencies involved in responding to protests since the death of George Floyd. It also should examine from where the agency received its directives. In order to facilitate its investigation, I urge the OIG to create a website for people who were targeted by the Park

Police or other law enforcement agencies within the Department to provide statements and photographic or video evidence.


The First Amendment rights to free speech, peaceful assembly, and free press are the building blocks of all other rights. Any actions by the Park Police to muzzle these rights is an affront to all Americans and should be swiftly addressed.

Thank you for your prompt consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Ron Wyden
U.S. Senator

Raúl M. Grijalva
U.S. Representative

Debra Haaland
U.S. Representative
Attachments

Photograph 1: Reuters reported, "Riot police chase a man as they rush protestors to clear Lafayette Park and the area around it across from the White House for President Donald Trump to be able to walk through for a photo opportunity in front of St. John's Episcopal Church, during a rally against the death in Minneapolis police custody of George Floyd, near the White House, in Washington, U.S. June 1, 2020." (Source: supra, note 4).

Photograph 2: This still image from a video shows a U.S. Park Police officer punching a cameraman with an Australian news outlet. The Australian government has called for an investigation of the attack (Source: supra, note 2).