



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON  
**NATURAL RESOURCES**  
CHAIRMAN BRUCE WESTERMAN

**To:** House Committee on Natural Resources Republican Members  
**From:** Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations staff,  
Michelle Lane ([Michelle.Lane@mail.house.gov](mailto:Michelle.Lane@mail.house.gov)) and Lucas Drill  
([Lucas.Drill@mail.house.gov](mailto:Lucas.Drill@mail.house.gov))  
**Date:** Thursday, September 26, 2024  
**Subject:** Oversight Hearing on “*Desecrating Old Glory: Investigating How the Pro-Hamas Protests Turned National Park Service Land into a Violent Disgrace*”

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The House Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations will hold an oversight hearing titled *Desecrating Old Glory: Investigating How the Pro-Hamas Protests Turned National Park Service Land into a Violent Disgrace* on **September 26, 2024, at 2:00 p.m. in 1324 Longworth House Office Building.**

Member offices are requested to notify Cross Thompson ([Cross.Thompson@mail.house.gov](mailto:Cross.Thompson@mail.house.gov)) by 4:30 p.m. on Wednesday, September 25, 2024, if their member intends to participate in the hearing.

**I. KEY MESSAGES**

- On July 24, 2024, the ANSWER Coalition led a large public protest that quickly devolved into a riot on National Park Service lands in the Union Station area of Washington, D.C.
- During this specific protest, the ANSWER Coalition and riot participants broke almost every rule of their public gathering permit, which resulted in the permit being revoked. The riot involved burning American flags, assaulting police officers, and raising foreign flags on American soil.
- ANSWER Coalition has been involved in protests across the United States, including those targeting college campuses and infrastructure as part of the broader “Shut it Down for Palestine” movement.
- Concerningly, these groups and their affiliates not only destroy property and cause violence on campuses and federal lands but have ties to foreign organizations like Hamas and the Chinese Communist Party.

## II. WITNESSES

### Panel 1:

- **The Hon. Mark Lee Greenblatt**, Inspector General, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C.
- **Mr. Charles Cuevelier**, Associate Director, Visitor and Resource Protection, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C.

### Panel 2:

- **Mr. Kenneth H. Spencer, III**, Chairman, United States Park Police Fraternal Order of Police, Washington, D.C.
- **Mr. Alex Goldenberg**, Director of Intelligence, Network Contagion Research Institute, Mount Pleasant, SC
- **Mr. Scott Walter**, President, Capital Research Center, Washington, D.C.
- **Mr. Harry Dunn**, Former United States Capitol Police Officer, Silver Springs, MD  
[*Minority Witness*]

## III. INTRODUCTION

As the only democracy in the Middle East, Israel has been a staunch ally of the United States since its establishment. In fact, the United States was the first country to recognize Israel as an independent nation in 1948.<sup>1</sup>

On May 31, 2024, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was invited to address a bipartisan, bicameral joint meeting of Congress.<sup>2</sup> The invitation was meant to give Prime Minister Netanyahu an opportunity “to share the Israeli government’s vision for defending democracy, combatting terror, and establishing a just and lasting peace in the region”<sup>3</sup> after Hamas—a Palestinian terrorist organization—savagely invaded Israel and murdered civilians there on October 7, 2023. Plans for Prime Minister Netanyahu’s speech were met with plans for protests.

Even before Congress formally invited Prime Minister Netanyahu to speak, leftist activists and lawmakers labeled him a war criminal and called for his arrest for leading his nation’s defensive military effort against Hamas.<sup>4</sup> On July 23, 2024, NPS granted a public gathering

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<sup>1</sup> See Office of the Spokesperson, *U.S. Relations with Israel*, U.S. DEPT. OF STATE (Jan. 30, 2023), <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-israel-2/>.

<sup>2</sup> See Patricia Zengerle, *Israel's Netanyahu gets invitation to address US Congress*, REUTERS (May 31, 2024), <https://www.reuters.com/world/us-congressional-leaders-invite-netanyahu-address-joint-meeting-congress-2024-05-31/>.

<sup>3</sup> See Press Release, Speaker of the House Mike Johnson, *Congressional Leaders Invite Israeli PM Netanyahu to Address Joint Meeting of Congress* (May 31, 2024), <https://www.speaker.gov/2024/05/31/congressional-leaders-invite-israeli-pm-netanyahu-to-address-joint-meeting-of-congress/>.

<sup>4</sup> See Giselle Ruhyyih Ewing, *Netanyahu accepts Congress’ invitation to speak despite blowback*, POLITICO (June 1, 2024), <https://www.politico.com/news/2024/06/01/netanyahu-congress-address-00161153>; Emanuel Fabian and Gianluca Pacchiani, *IDF estimates 3,000 Hamas terrorists invaded Israel in Oct. 7 onslaught*, THE TIMES OF ISRAEL (Nov. 1, 2023), <https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-estimates-3000-hamas-terrorists-invaded-israel-in-oct-7-onslaught/>; Stuart Winer, *Hamas actions are war crimes, could constitute genocide – international law experts*, THE TIMES OF ISRAEL (Oct. 15, 2023), <https://www.timesofisrael.com/hamas-actions-are-war-crimes-could-constitute-genocide-international-law-experts/>.

permit to the ANSWER Coalition—a radical anti-Israel organization also known as Act Now to Stop War and End Racism—to hold a protest to “Stop the genocide in Gaza.”<sup>5</sup>

### **U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR PERMIT**

ANSWER Coalition’s public gathering was approved to take place at Columbus Plaza; John Marshall Park; Pennsylvania Avenue North Sidewalk, 3rd – 5th Street; and Pennsylvania Avenue South Sidewalk, 3rd – 5th Street.<sup>6</sup> ANSWER anticipated that more than 5000 participants would attend the protest, and the permit enabled them to demonstrate from 5:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.<sup>7</sup>

The NPS permit made clear that its approval was subject to two conditions.<sup>8</sup> First, ANSWER and the protest’s participants had to comply with every written condition and regulation attached to the permit and with any reasonable directions of the United States Park Police (USPP) on the day of the event.<sup>9</sup> Second, ANSWER and its protestors could not obstruct any sidewalks, walkways, or roadways.<sup>10</sup> NPS reserved the right to revoke ANSWER’s permit immediately and at any time if “it reasonably appear[ed] that the public gathering presents clear and present danger to public safety, good order or health, or if any conditions of [the] permit are violated.”<sup>11</sup> The NPS has previously granted similar public gathering permits to the ANSWER Coalition, so these conditions were not unfamiliar.<sup>12</sup>

ANSWER’s planned protest quickly devolved into a riot as the organization either lost control of its crowd or instigated violations of the permit and law. Protesters disrupted traffic near the Capitol Complex and along Pennsylvania Avenue,<sup>13</sup> and buses around Union Station stopped service.<sup>14</sup> At Union Station, the rioters turned violent as they deliberately and maliciously defaced and destroyed federal property. Rioters tore down the American flag, burned the flag,<sup>15</sup> and replaced the American flag with a Palestinian flag.<sup>16</sup> Rioters defaced the Columbus Plaza monument and the replica Liberty Bell with pro-Hamas graffiti.<sup>17</sup> Rioters set

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<sup>5</sup> See U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, Public Gathering Permit NCA-NAMA-EVNT24-1278, Issued to ANSWER Coalition on July 23, 2023, for July 24, 2023, on file with the Committee.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*; see also Scott Streater, *Republicans want NPS probe of anti-Netanyahu protest*, E&E NEWS (July 30, 2024), <https://www.eenews.net/articles/republicans-want-nps-probe-of-anti-netanyahu-protest/>.

<sup>9</sup> See U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, Public Gathering Permit NCA-NAMA-EVNT24-1278, Issued to ANSWER Coalition on July 23, 2023, for July 24, 2023, on file with the Committee.

<sup>10</sup> *Id.*

<sup>11</sup> *Id.*

<sup>12</sup> See, e.g., Matt Pusatory and Jordan Fischer, *Thousands turn out for 'Free Palestine' rally near White House*, WUSA9 (Nov. 4, 2023), <https://www.wusa9.com/article/news/local/dc/dc-free-palestine-rally-plans/65-b565f86d-3d17-4320-83b9-6843c0f321c7>.

<sup>13</sup> See Laura Wainman et al., *23 arrests after thousands protest Netanyahu's speech to Congress*, WUSA9 (July 25, 2024), <https://www.wusa9.com/article/news/local/protests/protesters-on-capitol-hill-israeli-prime-minister-benjamin-netanyahu-speech-to-congress-live-updates/65-fe99a9ae-36af-49f7-9e0f-0fd16e2c9b29>.

<sup>14</sup> See Amber Anderson, *Buses currently not running to, from Union Station due to protests over Netanyahu Congressional speech*, WUSA9 (July 24, 2024), <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/buses-currently-not-running-to-from-union-station-due-to-protests-over-netanyahu-congressional-speech/ar-BB1qzoQf?ocid=BingNewsVerp>.

<sup>15</sup> See Moon, *Video: Pro-Palestinian Protesters Burn U.S. Flag Outside Union Station in Washington, D.C.*, CEDAR NEWS (July 25, 2024), <https://cedarnews.net/newstasks/739699/video-pro-palestinian-protesters-burn-u-s-flag-outside-union-station-in-washington-d-c/>.

<sup>16</sup> See Andrea Swalec, *'What happened at Union Station was vile': DC protest vandalism, flag-burning condemned*, NBC WASHINGTON (July 26, 2024), <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/what-happened-at-union-station-was-vile-dc-protest-vandalism-flag-burning-condemned/ar-BB1qCwIs?ocid=BingNewsSerp>.

<sup>17</sup> See Rebecca Turco, *Some faded graffiti remains outside Union Station following protests*, WJLA – WASHINGTON D.C. (July 28, 2024), <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/some-faded-graffiti-remains-outside-union-station-following-protests/ar-BB1qMIwZ?ocid=BingNewsVerp>.

fire to an effigy of Prime Minister Netanyahu outside of Union Station.<sup>18</sup> This illegal activity was captured through photographs and videos, which were widely shared and reported.

These criminal actions required offices of the USPP, Capitol Police, Metropolitan Police, and New York Police Department to act jointly to control the crowd. Because of the crowd's violence, law enforcement officers were forced to use pepper spray<sup>19</sup> and arrest some protesters. At 3:17 p.m., because of the growing violence and destruction at Union Station, NPS officially revoked the permit and ordered the rioters to disperse.<sup>20</sup> The ANSWER Coalition violated—and encouraged others to violate—nearly every permit provision.

Predictably, demonstrators continued to violate the permit's provisions even after it was revoked. ANSWER Coalition's violations—including assaults on federal officers, destruction of federal property, and resisting arrest—were serious enough to warrant the USPP contacting the Committee contemporaneously.<sup>21</sup>

The NPS-issued public gathering permit imposes basic but serious requirements on ANSWER Coalition as the permittee. The permit requires that “[t]he area should be left in substantially the same condition as it was prior to the activities authorized herein.” More specifically, the permit makes clear that the “[p]ermittee will be responsible for any injury to, loss of, or damage to federal owned or controlled lands, waters, or resources (natural or cultural resources or facilities) resulting from [p]ermittee's activities under this permit, 18 USC § 1361.”<sup>22</sup> 18 USC § 1361 provides for punishment in the form of both fines and imprisonment. Additionally, the permit states that the permittee, its agents, and its representatives may be held liable for any costs and damages associated with any injury or damage to NPS resources under 54 USC §§ 100721-100725.<sup>23</sup> To ensure that there is no confusion, other permit provisions prohibit “the alteration, damage, or removal of park resources or facilities”; attachment of any items—including signs and banners—to any landscape elements; and climbing, removing, or injuring any “statue seat, wall, fountain, light poles, elevator towers, or other erection or architectural feature, or any tree, shrub, or landscaping features.”<sup>24</sup> The National Park Service, following a recent arrest of a suspect involved in the protest, estimated the cost to repair and clean the graffiti alone at over \$11,000.<sup>25</sup>

The Committee is steadfast in its belief that given ANSWER's misuse and abuse of the permit it was granted, the organization, its named officers on the permit,<sup>26</sup> and any protestors

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<sup>18</sup> See Chad De Guzman et al., *Pro-Palestinian Protesters Burn American Flags and Deface Monuments Amid Clashes With Police in D.C.*, TIME (July 25, 2024), <https://time.com/7003081/photos-netanyahu-washington-dc-protests-demonstrations-police-clashes-arrests-capitol/>.

<sup>19</sup> See Brianna Herlihy, *Park Police union says officers 'did everything they could' during DC anti-Israel riot*, FOX News (July 26, 2024), <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/park-police-union-says-officers-did-everything-could-during-dc-anti-israel-riot>.

<sup>20</sup> See Brady Knox, *Protesters burn American flag at Union Station and raise Palestinian one in its place*, WASHINGTON EXAMINER (July 24, 2024), <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/news/content/ar-BB1qzmv0#:~:text=At%203%3A17%20p.m.%2C%20the%20United%20States%20Park%20Police,and%20everyone%20was%20ordered%20to%20leave%20the%20area>.

<sup>21</sup> Personal communications with USPP on file with Committee Staff.

<sup>22</sup> See U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, Public Gathering Permit NCA-NAMA-EVNT24-1278, Issued to ANSWER Coalition on July 23, 2023, for July 24, 2023, on file with the Committee.

<sup>23</sup> *Id.*

<sup>24</sup> *Id.*

<sup>25</sup> See *Towson woman allegedly vandalized D.C. property during Israeli Prime Minister protests*, CBS NEWS (Updated September 14, 2024) <https://www.cbsnews.com/baltimore/news/towson-woman-allegedly-vandalized-d-c-property-during-israeli-prime-minister-protests/>

<sup>26</sup> Although the permit was issued to the ANSWER Coalition, the permit listed specific responsible parties as persons in charge and on-site contacts. Brian Becker, ANSWER's national coordinator who is also an organizer for the Party for Socialism and Liberation, is listed as the person in charge. Layan Fuleihan, Mara Verheyden-Hilliard, and Carl Messineo are listed as on-site contacts.

who broke the law must be held accountable according to the terms of the permit.<sup>27</sup> The Committee also has questions regarding NPS’ permit-issuing process and the mechanisms in place to enforce permit terms when violations occur.

### **ANSWER COALITION’S PARTNERS AND DUBIOUS ANTI-ISRAEL FUNDING**

Before the permit was approved on July 23, 2024, ANSWER Coalition and The People’s Forum began advertising on social media a “National Mobilization” effort to “Surround the Capitol” and “Arrest Netanyahu” in conjunction with the planned joint session of Congress.<sup>28</sup> The People’s Forum describes itself as “a movement incubator for working class and marginalized communities to build unity across the historic lines of division at home and abroad.”<sup>29</sup> However, this socialist organization has direct ties to the ongoing antisemitic, anti-Israel campus protests of 2024, and—perhaps more alarmingly—has received large grants from major charities due to its status as a 501(c)(3) organization.<sup>30</sup>

Although ANSWER’s name was on the NPS permit, the ANSWER Coalition’s activities on July 24, 2024, were part of a broader “Shut it Down for Palestine” movement whose membership roster reads as a who’s who of radical leftist anti-Israel organizations.<sup>31</sup> At least seventeen Shut it Down for Palestine-connected organizations were listed as partner groups for ANSWER’s planned July 24 protests.<sup>32</sup>

ANSWER Coalition and its partner organizations involved in the July 24, 2024, protests have ties to funds that can be traced to Hamas and Iran. For example, Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) and American Muslims for Palestine (AMP) founder Hatem Bazian raised money for KindHearts, which was investigated and had its assets frozen due to its coordination with Hamas and Hamas officials.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, the Biden-Harris White House acknowledges that Iran is involved in funding U.S.-based activist organizations and protests.<sup>34</sup> These Iran and

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<sup>27</sup> See U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, Public Gathering Permit NCA-NAMA-EVNT24-1278, Issued to ANSWER Coalition on July 23, 2023, for July 24, 2023, on file with the Committee.

<sup>28</sup> See The People’s Forum (@PeoplesForumNYC), X (June 26, 2024, 7:10 PM), <https://x.com/PeoplesForumNYC/status/1806102026406760901> (asking people to “Get on the Bus from NYC”).

<sup>29</sup> About, THE PEOPLE’S FORUM, <https://peoplesforum.org/about/#mission>.

<sup>30</sup> See Joseph Simonson, *Anti-Israel Group Encouraged Columbia Protestors to Re-Create ‘The Summer of 2020’ Hours Before Students Stormed a Building*, THE WASHINGTON FREE BEACON (May 1, 2024), <https://freebeacon.com/campus/anti-israel-group-encouraged-columbia-protesters-to-recreate-the-summer-of-2020-hours-before-students-stormed-a-building/>.

<sup>31</sup> See *July 24 Arrest Netanyahu! Surround Congress with the People’s Red Line*, THE PEOPLE’S FORUM, <https://secure.givelively.org/donate/peoples-forum-inc/july-24-arrest-netanyahu-surround-congress-with-the-people-s-red-line> (linked directly from Shut it Down for Palestine’s “Donate Here!” website button, <https://www.shutitdown4palestine.org/about>); see also About, SHUT IT DOWN FOR PALESTINE, <https://www.shutitdown4palestine.org/about> (listing Palestinian Youth Movement, National Students for Justice in Palestine, ANSWER Coalition, The People’s Forum, International Peoples’ Assembly, Al-Awda – NY, and Palestinian American Community Center (PACC) – NJ as founding organizations).

<sup>32</sup> A poster for ANSWER’s event was previously publicly available and advertised seventeen partner organizations, including The People’s Forum and Code Pink. The poster asked viewers to “endorse” the July 24 protests through a link to a Shut it Down for Palestine-run website: [shutitdown4palestine.org/july24endorse](https://www.shutitdown4palestine.org/july24endorse). A screenshot of the poster is on file with the Committee. It is also important to note that the organization Jewish Voice for Peace engaged in an illegal “sit-in” demonstration the day before ANSWER’s planned protest under the Cannon House Office Building’s Rotunda, during which 200 demonstrators were arrested. See Ayana Archie, *About 200 people protesting Gaza war arrested in congressional building, police say*, KPBS (July 24, 2024), <https://www.kpbs.org/news/national/2024/07/24/about-200-people-protesting-gaza-war-arrested-in-congressional-building-police-say>.

<sup>33</sup> See *Id.*; see also Press Release, U.S. Dept. of Treasury, Treasury Freezes Assets of Organization Tied to Hamas (February 19, 2006) <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/js4058>.

<sup>34</sup> Press Briefing, Press Briefing by Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre and National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby (July 25, 2024), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/press-briefings/2024/07/25/press-briefing-by-press-secretary-karine-jean-pierre-and-national-security-communications-advisor-john-kirby-7/>.

Hamas-backed organizations include the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR) and AMP,<sup>35</sup> which partnered with ANSWER to protest on July 24, 2024.<sup>36</sup>

Unsurprisingly, Shut it Down for Palestine-affiliated organizations account for the vast majority of recent anti-Israel protests—including those vandalizing federal property and disrupting university campuses—and have ties to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and Hamas.<sup>37</sup> Concerningly, Neville Roy Singham and his wife, Code Pink founder Jodie Evans, are heavily involved in the Shut it Down for Palestine movement.<sup>38</sup> Mr. Singham and Ms. Evans are well-known for their efforts to promote radical leftist policies in the United States on behalf of China.<sup>39</sup> Mr. Singham’s network, which includes CCP-connected BreakThrough Media, has been the subject of numerous public and private investigations related to foreign agency.<sup>40</sup> Interestingly, Mr. Singham also funds the Progress Unity Fund, which sponsors ANSWER and its activities.<sup>41</sup>

## **RESPONSE TO THE RIOTS**

The riots outside of Union Station were widely condemned. Fewer than 30 arrests were made related to the Union Station protests.<sup>42</sup> While these arrest numbers were criticized for being low,<sup>43</sup> the U.S. Park Police Labor Committee stresses a lack of manpower on the ground that day.<sup>44</sup> Allegedly, only 29 officers were available to control the protesters.<sup>45</sup>

In response to calls for help from law enforcement—particularly from USPP—Committee Chairman Westerman took immediate action, calling on DOI Secretary Haaland to address the lack of resources available for law enforcement.<sup>46</sup> Additionally, after the protests, Chairman Westerman,<sup>47</sup> Speaker Mike Johnson and additional members of Congress went to Union Station to visit the site, remove foreign flags and banners, raise the American flag,<sup>48</sup> and witness the

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<sup>35</sup> Lara L. Burns, *Fueling Chaos: Tracing the Flow of Tax-Exempt Dollars to Antisemitism*, Testimony before the Committee on Ways and Means (July 23, 2024), <https://waysandmeans.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Burns-Testimony.pdf>.

<sup>36</sup> Poster with ANSWER Coalition’s protest partners on file with the Committee.

<sup>37</sup> See NETWORK CONTAGION RESEARCH INSTITUTE, *CONTAGIOUS DISRUPTION: HOW CCP INFLUENCE AND RADICAL IDEOLOGIES THREATEN CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND CAMPUSES ACROSS THE UNITED STATES* (2024), [https://networkcontagion.us/wp-content/uploads/SID4P-Report\\_May-2024.pdf](https://networkcontagion.us/wp-content/uploads/SID4P-Report_May-2024.pdf).

<sup>38</sup> *Id.*

<sup>39</sup> *See Id.*

<sup>40</sup> See NETWORK CONTAGION RESEARCH INSTITUTE, *CONTAGIOUS DISRUPTION: HOW CCP INFLUENCE AND RADICAL IDEOLOGIES THREATEN CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND CAMPUSES ACROSS THE UNITED STATES* (2024), [https://networkcontagion.us/wp-content/uploads/SID4P-Report\\_May-2024.pdf](https://networkcontagion.us/wp-content/uploads/SID4P-Report_May-2024.pdf).

<sup>41</sup> See NETWORK CONTAGION RESEARCH INSTITUTE, *CONTAGIOUS DISRUPTION: HOW CCP INFLUENCE AND RADICAL IDEOLOGIES THREATEN CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND CAMPUSES ACROSS THE UNITED STATES* (2024), [https://networkcontagion.us/wp-content/uploads/SID4P-Report\\_May-2024.pdf](https://networkcontagion.us/wp-content/uploads/SID4P-Report_May-2024.pdf).

<sup>42</sup> See Peter Hermann et al., *Charges dropped against 11 anti-Netanyahu protesters arrested in D.C.*, THE WASHINGTON POST (July 26, 2024), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2024/07/26/dc-netanyahu-protests-dropped-charges/>; Kaelan Deese, *Eight anti-Israel protesters face federal charges after DC prosecutors drop cases*, WASHINGTON EXAMINER (July 26, 2024),

<https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/news/justice/3101274/eight-anti-israel-protesters-face-federal-charges-dc-prosecutors-drop-cases/>; Kaelan Deese, *Anti-Israel protester charged for damaging federal property during Netanyahu visit*, WASHINGTON EXAMINER (Sept. 13, 2024), <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/news/justice/3153697/anti-israel-protester-charged-damaging-federal-property-netanyahu-visit/>.

<sup>43</sup> See Brianna Herlihy, *Park Police union says officers ‘did everything they could’ during DC anti-Israel riot*, FOX NEWS (July 26, 2024), <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/park-police-union-says-officers-did-everything-could-during-dc-anti-israel-riot>.

<sup>44</sup> *Id.*

<sup>45</sup> *Id.*

<sup>46</sup> See Letter from Rep. Bruce Westerman, Chairman, H. Comm. on Natural Resources, to Deb Haaland, Secretary, U.S. Dept. of the Interior (July 24, 2024), [https://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/2024.07.24\\_hnr\\_ltr\\_uspp.pdf](https://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/2024.07.24_hnr_ltr_uspp.pdf).

<sup>47</sup> See H. Comm. on Natural Resources (@NatResources), X (July 24, 2024, 3:53 p.m.), <https://x.com/NatResources/status/1816562453758587380>.

<sup>48</sup> See Lauren Sforza, *House Republicans restore US flags burned in DC protest: ‘We righted their wrong’*, THE HILL (July 25, 2024), <https://thehill.com/homenews/house/4792204-house-republicans-raise-flags/>.

damage caused by rioters. The Committee’s investigation into the protests on NPS land and DOI’s response to them continue.<sup>49</sup>

In the aftermath of the protests, USPP and the FBI launched an investigation to identify and apprehend the suspects who vandalized federal property and assaulted federal law enforcement officers.<sup>50</sup> The FBI is currently offering a reward for information leading to the identification, arrest, and conviction of these suspects, and have recently announced the arrest of one suspect in conjunction with the US. Attorney’s Office.<sup>51</sup>

## **U.S. PARK POLICE FUNDING AND RESOURCES**

NPS manages 431 units covering over 85 million acres in all 50 U.S. states and territories.<sup>52</sup> NPS’ FY 2025 budget requests \$3.58 billion in discretionary funding, an increase of \$101.1 million over FY 2024 CR levels.<sup>53</sup> This will support an estimated 19,953 FTEs—an increase of 134 employees.<sup>54</sup> The USPP officers support the efforts of NPS law enforcement rangers in parks nationwide, but they primarily “provide law enforcement services to designated National Park Service sites in the metropolitan areas of Washington, D.C., New York City, and San Francisco.”<sup>55</sup>

Funds for USPP come from NPS’ Operation of the National Park System (ONPS) account. Several subaccounts support USPP, including USPP operations, Park Visitor Protection Support Functions, Presidential Inauguration, and contributions for annuity benefit accounts. For example, the USPP Operations in Washington, D.C., were funded at \$95,012,000 for FY 2024.<sup>56</sup>

In response to the Committee’s inquiries regarding the recent protest, NPS predictably blamed a lack of funding and resources for its inability to recruit, retain, and mobilize law enforcement officers.<sup>57</sup> However, in addition to ongoing funding, NPS received \$500 million to support hiring new employees through the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) of 2022, only \$19 million of which the Biden-Harris administration chose to dedicate specifically to USPP recruitment.<sup>58</sup> Despite repeatedly blaming funding issues, NPS only onboarded 447 employees and spent \$21.4 million out of the \$500 million IRA funds as of May 2024, according to the Department of the Interior’s Inspector General.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> See Letter from Rep. Bruce Westerman, Chairman, H. Comm. on Natural Resources, et al. to Deb Haaland, Secretary, U.S. Dept. of the Interior and Charles Sams, Director, National Park Service (July 29, 2024), [https://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/2024.07.29\\_hnr\\_haalands\\_sams\\_protest\\_investigation\\_letter.pdf](https://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/2024.07.29_hnr_haalands_sams_protest_investigation_letter.pdf).

<sup>50</sup> See FED. BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION, MOST WANTED SEEKING INFORMATION: DESTRUCTION OF FEDERAL PROPERTY AND ASSAULT OF FEDERAL OFFICERS (July 24, 2024), <https://www.fbi.gov/wanted/seeking-info/destruction-of-federal-property-and-assault-of-federal-officers>.

<sup>51</sup> *Id.*

<sup>52</sup> See *About Us*, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, <https://www.nps.gov/aboutus/faqs.htm>.

<sup>53</sup> See U.S. DEPT. OF THE INTERIOR, *Budget Justifications and Performance Information Fiscal Year 2025 National Park Service* (2024), <https://www.doi.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2024-03/fy2025-508-nps-greenbook.pdf>, at Overview - 2.

<sup>54</sup> *Id.*

<sup>55</sup> *Id.* at ONPS-59.

<sup>56</sup> *Id.* at Overview - 65.

<sup>57</sup> September 10, 2024, response letter from Charles Sams, Director, National Park Service, on file with the Committee.

<sup>58</sup> Sean Michael Newhouse, *National Park Service’s IRA hiring surge could fail ahead of funding deadline*, GOVERNMENT EXECUTIVE (Aug. 16, 2024), <https://www.govexec.com/oversight/2024/08/national-park-services-ira-hiring-surge-could-fail-ahead-funding-deadline/398868/>.

<sup>59</sup> See U.S. Dept. of the Interior Office of the Inspector General, Flash Report: The National Park Service’s Inflation Reduction Act Hiring Efforts and Activities (Aug. 2024), <https://www.doiig.gov/sites/default/files/2021-migration/NPS%20Staffing%20Flash%20Report.pdf>.

A table assembled by the Congressional Research Service, demonstrates USPP funding from FY 2018 through FY 2024.<sup>60</sup>

**Table I. Appropriations for U.S. Park Police Operations, FY2018-FY2024**  
(\$ millions)

<b>Year</b>	<b>Appropriation</b>
FY2018	\$110.4
FY2019	\$106.5
FY2020	\$109.2
FY2021	\$114.8 <sup>a</sup>
FY2022	\$118.5
FY2023	\$123.4
FY2024	\$123.4
Multiple (P.L. 117-169) <sup>b</sup>	\$29.0
<b>Total, FY2018-FY2024</b>	<b>\$835.3</b>

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

Although all Americans have the right to engage in peaceful protests, violent demonstrations such as the one on July 24, 2024, have no place in our Nation and must be condemned by action. Based on its ongoing investigation and the nature of the July protests, the Committee remains concerned that without proper controls in the NPS permitting process and adequate law enforcement presence, the groups involved may return to NPS sites in the future, apply for permits, and proceed to incite violence and vandalize America’s public lands.

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<sup>60</sup> FY 2018 – FY 2023 data are from National Park Service budget justifications. The final appropriation for each year is shown in the budget justification for two years later (for example, the FY 2018 final appropriation is shown in the FY 2020 budget justification). The FY 2024 data, along with data on U.S. Park Police appropriations from P.L. 117-169, are from CRS communication with the NPS budget office on September 18, 2024. The FY 2021 appropriation includes non-recurring funding of \$2.4 million for law enforcement, visitor and employee safety, resource protection, and other activities conducted by the U.S. Park Police during the Presidential Inauguration. Sections 50221-50224 of P.L. 117-169, commonly known as the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022, appropriated funding to NPS and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), including \$250 million collectively for both agencies for land conservation and resiliency projects (Sec. 50221), \$250 million collectively for both agencies for ecosystem and habitat restoration (Sec. 50222), \$500 million for NPS to hire employees (Sec. 50233), and \$200 million for NPS deferred maintenance (Sec. 50224). In communication with CRS, the NPS budget office reported that \$29 million has been programmed from the IRA for the U.S. Park Police.