

**Office of the Sergeant at Arms
Testimony of
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U.S. House of Representatives
Before
The Subcommittee on Legislative Branch
Committee on Appropriations**

Chairman Ryan, Ranking Member Herrera Beutler, and Members of Appropriations Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the security failures of January 6th.

Before I begin, I want to acknowledge the debt of gratitude we owe to the officers of the United States Capitol Police, Metropolitan Police, and other law enforcement partners who came to the aid of the institution and risked their lives so that our Constitution and democracy could endure. I cannot thank them enough. Many bear scars, seen and unseen from that day. Others will face challenges that last a lifetime.

I want to thank Congress for helping provide a fitting tribute for Officer Sicknick. We mourn as a community for the loss of his life but the recognition rightfully bestowed upon him hopefully served as a moment of healing for the USCP, and for all law enforcement who make sacrifices on a daily basis to provide for our safety. I want to acknowledge the sacrifices of the Liebengood and Smith families. Their sacrifices will never be forgotten.

I also want to thank the National Guard, who have come from near and far to keep our city on a Hill safe. They have left their families amidst a pandemic to work in an uncertain environment. Their presence makes us safer. And we thank them for it.

I do have several observations to provide to the Committee regarding our campus security posture in the hopes of providing constructive feedback to assist in building a more secure Capitol complex going forward. The tragedy of January 6th is rooted in missing intelligence and analysis that negatively impacted the decision-making process. As a result of these decisions, many brave women and men of the Capitol Police, the Metropolitan Police, and other law enforcement partners were put at risk but ultimately brought safety back to our Capitol and our democracy. We owe it to them to examine these failures to ensure that nothing like this happens ever again. I would place my observations into four categories: 1) intelligence; 2) preparation; 3) communication; and 4) the path forward. Each of these areas requires thorough review, constructive criticisms, policy, and process changes to better secure the Capitol.

I. Intelligence

As I stated in my previous briefing to the Appropriations Committee, the Intelligence surrounding January 6th was problematic. Intelligence requires finding the needles in a haystack. On January 6th, there was a failure to either gather, synthesize, or disseminate intelligence and there were indications that intelligence was muddled or contradictory. For example, the January 3rd intelligence assessment from the Capitol Police has been touted as including information that makes it clear that January 6th would become violent. Indeed, on page 13 of the document, the assessment states that “[t]his sense of desperation of and disappointment may lead to more of an incentive to become violent. Unlike previous post-election protests, the targets of the pro-Trump supporters are not necessarily the counter-protesters as they were previously, but rather Congress itself is the target on the 6th.” Taken by itself, the language is a warning.

However, the document, also states that “[t]he protestors/rallies are expected to be similar to previous Million MAGA March rallies in November and December 2020, which drew tens of thousands of participants.” While there was arrests and violence between protestors and counter-protestors at the previous events, I believe that these previous events informed the January 6th security plan of action. As we now know, the events of January 6th were not like the previous Million MAGA marches or any other rallies we had ever held on Capitol grounds. The intelligence provided to the Capitol Police and other law enforcement did not anticipate a coordinated attack. Warnings should not be qualified or hidden. Bad information, conflicting information or missing information leads to poor decisions. In fact, when the USCP presented this assessment to the Sergeant at Arms, they simultaneously briefed on the plan of action for January 6. One would think that the plan developed by the USCP took into account the intelligence as they were seeing it at that time.

One would also expect these warning to be reflected in all subsequent intelligence reports. The Office of the Sergeant at Arms received Daily Intelligence Reports from the Capitol Police following the initial assessment referenced on January 3rd. On the Daily Intelligence Reports received on January 4th, 5th, and 6th, the Capitol Police listed demonstrations and categorized the probability of civil disobedience or arrests as “remote, highly improbable, or improbable” for each of those days and for every single demonstration. So, while the January 3rd Assessment notes a possibility of violence against Congress itself, every single subsequent Daily Intelligence Report indicates only “remote, highly improbable, or improbable” chance of civil disobedience or arrests. This characterization of the threat posed by these protests only reinforce the notion and thinking that these were similar to the two previous demonstrations and not the violent insurrection that we experienced. The Office of the Sergeant at Arms is a consumer of intelligence products, we do not independently acquire or analyze intelligence. We are dependent on the Capitol Police to provide timely, accurate, and succinct intelligence to help guide security decisions.

In addition, the intelligence does not appear to be disseminated widely. ProPublica has reported that “intelligence ... was not widely shared within the department.” Furthermore, USCP officers

reportedly stated that “they received no warning whatsoever going into Jan. [sic] 6.” My own anecdotal experience confirms that information is not quickly and widely disseminated across divisions and up and down the chain of command. Again, the differences between the January 3rd assessment and the subsequent Daily Intelligence reports demonstrate a failure to integrate intelligence within the USCP Intelligence Division itself. Finally, as far as I am aware, the Office of the Sergeant at Arms did not receive the information produced by the Norfolk FBI office – perhaps the most vital intelligence – even though the USCP’s own timeline of events noted that the USCP task force agent embedded with the FBI emailed the memorandum up the chain of command. My predecessor testified he did not receive it.

II. Preparation

It pains me to say this today, but the intelligence missteps cascaded into inadequate preparation, which placed the health and lives of front-line officers at risk. While front line officers did everything they could that day, the Capitol Police was prepared for a 1st Amendment event, but not adequately prepared for the events January 6th. For example, former Chief Sund noted in his letter to Congressional leadership that he had expedited the delivery of approximately 104 helmets for officers. It was a good decision to expedite the delivery of helmets, but it also raises questions as to why there were not already helmets on hand for officers. Also, if there was a need to expedite the helmets, why wasn’t there a plan for a more hardened posture for the Complex? I support any efforts we can to acquire all the gear our officers need to keep safe – and to be able to keep the gear on-hand - and have expressed this support to the Capitol Police Board.

The inadequate preparation was also displayed by the original perimeter plan presented by the Capitol Police to the Office of the Sergeant at Arms on January 3rd. The original plan focused barriers on Constitution Avenue and First Street consistent with the two previous rallies and did not focus on securing the East and West Fronts of the Capitol. If the intelligence was adequately synthesized, I am sure that the Capitol Police would have operated on a different posture. However, the perimeters that were established were overrun as we saw that on January 6th. This is just one example of the planning being impacted by a lack of adequate intelligence.

Proper planning before an event will provide the needed support to the officers on the line and help to ensure that the event does not turn into crisis. Intelligence cannot solely dictate the posture against security threats. We must also prepare for contingencies. The failure to prepare for contingencies can result in greater difficulty in execution.

III. Communication

The failure of planning illustrated the necessity for high-quality, flexible, and succinct communications during a crisis. There are two areas that I focused on in the prior Appropriations Briefing: 1) Emergency Messaging, and 2) Personnel Accountability.

Our current communications structure is too rigid to appropriately adapt to the numerous crises that unfolded that day—multiple bombs, a breach of the Capitol, and an insurrection. The different crises strained the ability to communicate fast, accurate, and pertinent information. In addition, the sole reliance on pre-worded, generic messaging is not transparent. Originally designed to avoid disseminating incorrect information during an event, the communications did not convey much needed information in an evolving crisis. We also need to rethink the frequency of communication. In the past, we have been criticized for sending too many messages. This may be a fair point when dealing with day-to-day incidents, but not during an extraordinary situation. I have tasked my staff with developing a better system.

We also need to develop a personnel accountability system. Members, staff, and visitors continually traverse the Capitol and the House Office Buildings and find themselves in unfamiliar and unexpected rooms for important meetings. But, in a crisis we need easy ways for individuals to communicate where they are and that they need assistance. During the insurrection on January 6th, there were Members and staff that were trapped in their offices. When my staff was notified, my staff or the Capitol Police, or both together worked to extract the individuals from where they were trapped, but the system was dependent on my staff being notified. We need an easy system for notification and a comprehensive system for dispatch. Future plans involve a technology solution coupled with a systemic solution. Both require the right tuning to ensure that Members and staff can quickly and easily notify the USCP that they need help and USCP can dispatch help.

IV. Path Forward

Security examinations are currently underway to make sure that we are prepared for the next January 6th. Lt. General Russell Honore and his task force have been working to not only examine the security postures on the Hill, but also the security of Members traveling, as well as in their Districts. My office has worked in coordination with General Honore and his team giving him full access to support his critical tasking. This could prove to be a valuable input in how we can better align the Office of the Sergeant at Arms to provide security services to Members.

In the aftermath of January 6th, I know that the Office of the Sergeant at Arms must provide more to Members and staff. The scenes of Members being harassed at airports and on airplanes is disturbing. We must do more to help protect you while you are traveling. So, I have directed my staff, and Gen. Honore's team is reviewing, ways that we can better provide these services to Members and your staff.

These better services will come with an accompanying cost. I am committed to carefully stewarding the funds this subcommittee provides. Funding is an important aspect, but just as important, if not more so, is the right organizational structure. A new look and perspective will help inform my own proposals that this subcommittee will see. There are short, medium, and long-term changes that must occur for Members and staff to be safer.

In addition, I support the necessary infrastructure improvements that are immediately required to harden the buildings and further secure all who come here. I also support the changes that the Capitol Police will propose to its FTE structure, equipment upgrades and investment in its officers. The Capitol Police and the Office of the Sergeant at Arms will evolve to better secure Congress. It will not only take funding, manpower, and training, but also changing organizational structures to ensure that security needs are met. There will be growing pains in calibrating to a new mission and culture, but it is necessary. Other security changes will also allow us to draw down other security measures that we have, such as the temporary fencing and presence of the National Guard. The subcommittee has supported several security initiatives, such as garage security and the new joint audible warning system, in the past and I hope it can count on its support to complete the work we need to do.

I also ask for your support in developing the security culture that is needed on the Hill. My office is developing emergency training for Members on the House Floor. I ask that you attend them and urge your colleagues to do so. I ask that you mandate that your staff take the training my office provides. Training is not a panacea for the challenges we face, but it can help everyone approach trials with preparation.

I also ask for you and your staff's suggestions. We work to support you and keep you safe and we want to provide you the services you need to do that.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I welcome your questions.