

**Written Statement of U.S. Capitol Police Sergeant
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**Hearing Before the Select Committee
to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol,
U.S. House of Representatives**

January 27, 2021

Chairman Thompson and Members of the Select Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding the attack on the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021. It is with honor, and a heavy heart, that I come before you to tell you my story, from painful, first-hand experience, of what happened that terrible day at the Capitol. I am providing this testimony solely in my personal capacity, and not as a representative of the U.S. Capitol Police.

It is imperative that the events of January 6 are fully investigated, that Congress and the American people know the truth of what actually occurred, and that all those responsible are held accountable, particularly to ensure this horrific and shameful event in our history never repeats itself. I applaud you for pursuing this objective.

Even though there is overwhelming evidence to the contrary, including hours and hours of video and photographic coverage, there is a continuous and shocking attempt to ignore or try to destroy the truth of what truly happened that day, and to whitewash the facts into something other than what they unmistakably reveal: An attack on our democracy by violent domestic extremists, and a stain on our history and our moral standing here at home and abroad.

As a child in the Dominican Republic, I looked up to the United States as a land of opportunity and a place to better myself. From the moment I landed at JFK airport in 1992, I have strived to pursue that goal. Thankfully, I have achieved that goal on many levels: I was the first in my family to graduate college, join the U.S. Army, and become a police officer.

On July 23, 1999, the day before my 21st birthday, I raised my hand to give back to the country that gave me an opportunity to be anything I wanted. At the time, I had already started basic training with the Army Reserve. In fact, I have raised my hand several times in ceremonies to pledge my commitment to “Defend and Protect the Constitution of the United States”: when I joined the Army Reserves, when I was promoted to Sergeant while in the Army, during my naturalization ceremony, when I reenlisted in the Army, when I joined the United States Capitol Police, and lastly when I was promoted to sergeant in the U.S. Capitol Police 3 years ago. I have always taken my Oath seriously.

On January 6, 2021, I fulfilled my oath once more: this time, to defend the United States Capitol and Members of Congress carrying out their Constitutional duties to certify the results of the November 2020 presidential election.

To be honest, I did not recognize my fellow citizens who stormed the Capitol on January 6, or the United States they claimed to represent. When I was 25, and then a sergeant in the Army, I had deployed to Iraq for Operation Iraqi Freedom. From time-to-time, I volunteered to travel on IED-infested roads to conduct supply missions for U.S. and allied military forces and local Iraqi populations. But on January 6, for the first time, I was more afraid working at the Capitol than during my entire Army deployment to Iraq. In Iraq, we expected armed violence, because we were in a war zone. But nothing in my experience in the Army, or as a law enforcement officer, prepared me for what we confronted on January 6.

The verbal assaults and disrespect we endured from the rioters were bad enough. I was falsely accused of betraying my “Oath” and of choosing my “paycheck” over my loyalty to the U.S. Constitution – even as I defended the very democratic process that protected everyone in that hostile crowd. While I was on the Lower West Terrace at the Capitol, working with my fellow officers to prevent a breach and restore order, the rioters called me a “traitor,” a “disgrace,” and shouted that I (an Army veteran and police officer) should be “executed”. Some of the rioters had the audacity to tell me that it was “nothing personal,” that they would “go through” us to achieve their goals as they were breaking metal barriers to use as weapons against us. Others used more menacing language: “If you shoot us, we all have weapons, and we will shoot back”, or “we will get our guns”. “We outnumber you, join us,” they said. I also heard specific threats on the lives of Speaker Nancy Pelosi and then-Vice President Mike Pence.

But the physical violence we experienced was horrific and devastating. My fellow officers and I were punched, pushed, kicked, shoved, sprayed with chemical irritants, and even blinded with eye-damaging lasers by a violent mob who apparently saw us law enforcement officers, dedicated to ironically protecting *them* as U.S. citizens, as an impediment in their attempted insurrection. The mob brought weapons to try to accomplish their insurrectionist objectives, and they used them against us. These weapons included hammers, rebars, knives, batons and police shields taken by force, as well as, bear spray and pepper spray. Some rioters wore tactical gear, including bulletproof vests and gas masks. The rioters also forcibly took our batons and shields and used them against us. I was particularly shocked at seeing the insurrectionists violently attack us with the very American flag they claimed they sought to protect. Based on the coordinated tactics we observed and verbal commands we heard, it appeared that many of the attackers had law enforcement or military experience.

The rioters were vicious and relentless. We found ourselves in a violent battle in a desperate attempt to prevent a breach of the Capitol by the entrance near the Inauguration Stage. Metropolitan DC Police (“MPD”) officers were being pulled into the crowd as we tried to push all the rioters back from breaching Capitol. In my attempt to assist two MPD officers, I grabbed one officer by the back of the collar and pulled him back to our police line. When I tried to help the second officer, I fell on top of some police shields on the ground that were slippery because of the pepper and bear spray. Rioters started to pull me by my leg, by my shield, and by my gear straps on my left shoulder. My survival instincts kicked in and I started kicking and punching as I tried in vain to get the MPD officers’ attention behind and above me. But they could not help me because they were also being attacked. I finally was able to hit a rioter who was grabbing me with my baton and able to stand. I then continued to fend off new attackers as they kept rotating after attacking us.

What we were subjected to that day was like something from a medieval battlefield. We fought hand-to-hand and inch-by-inch to prevent an invasion of the Capitol by a violent mob intent on subverting our democratic process. My fellow officers and I were committed to not letting any rioters breach the Capitol. It was a prolonged and desperate struggle. I vividly heard officers screaming in agony and pain just an arms-length from me. One of those officers is here today. I, too, was being crushed by the rioters. I could feel myself losing oxygen and recall thinking to myself “this is how I’m going to die, trampled defending this entrance.” Many of the officers fighting alongside me were calling for shields, because their shields had been stripped from them by the rioters. I was one of the few officers left with a shield, so I spent the majority of the time at the front of the line .

I later found out that my wife and relatives here in the U.S and abroad were frantically calling and texting me from 2:00 pm onwards because they were watching the turmoil live on television. But it was not until around 4:26 pm, after giving CPR to one of the rioters who breached the Capitol in an effort to save her life, that I finally had a chance to let my own family know that I was alive.

After order finally had been restored at the Capitol and after many exhausting hours, I arrived home at nearly 4:00 am on January 7. I had to push away my wife from hugging me because of all the chemicals that covered my body. I couldn’t sleep because the chemicals reactivated after I took a shower, and my skin was still burning. I finally fell asleep two hours later, completely physically and mentally exhausted. Yet by 8:00 am that day I was already on my way back to the Capitol, and I continued to work for 15 consecutive days until after the Inauguration. I made sure to work despite my injuries because I wanted to continue doing my job and help secure the Capitol complex. Six months later, I am still trying to recover from my injuries.

Many of my fellow Capitol Police officers, as well as MPD officers, suffered terrible physical injuries from the violence inflicted on us on January 6. I sustained injuries to both of my hands, my left shoulder, my left calf, and my right foot. I have already undergone fusion surgery on my foot, and I was just told that I need surgery on my left shoulder. I have been on medical and administrative leave for much of the past six months, and I expect to need further rehabilitation for possibly more than a year.

There are some who expressed outrage when someone simply kneeled for social justice during the national anthem. Where are those same people expressing outrage to condemn the violent attack on law enforcement officers, the U.S. Capitol, and our American democracy?

As America and the world watched in horror what was happening to us at the Capitol, we did not receive the timely reinforcements and support we needed. In contrast, during the Black Lives Matter protest last year, U.S. Capitol Police had all the support we needed and more. Why the different response? Were it not for the brave members of the MPD and officers for other agencies, I am afraid to think what could have happened on January 6. I want to publicly thank all the law enforcement agencies that responded to assist that day for their courage and support. I especially want to thank those Capitol Police officers who responded on their own.

Despite being outnumbered, we did our job. Every Member of the House of Representatives, Senator, and staff member made it home safely. Sadly, as a result of that day, we lost officers - some really good officers. But we held the line to protect our democratic process, and because the alternative would have been a disaster. We are not asking for medals or even recognition. We simply want accountability and justice.

For most people, January 6 happened for a few hours that day. But for those of us who were in the thick of it, it has not ended. That day continues to be a constant trauma for us literally every day, whether because of our physical or emotional injuries, or both. While it has not received much attention, sadly many of my colleagues have quietly resigned from the Capitol Police because of that day. I am also regularly called by the law enforcement officials and prosecutors to help identify rioters from photographs and videos. And to be honest, physical therapy is painful and hard. I could have lost my life that day, but as soon as I recover from my injuries I will continue forward and proudly serve my country and the U.S. Capitol Police. As an immigrant to the United States, I am especially proud to have defended the U.S. Constitution and our democracy on January 6. I hope that everyone in a position of authority in our country has the courage and conviction to do their part by investigating what happened on that terrible day, and why.

This investigation is essential to our democracy, and I am deeply grateful to you for undertaking it. I am happy to assist as I can, and answer any questions you have to the best of my ability.