



One Hundred Sixteenth Congress
Committee on Homeland Security
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

July 6, 2020

The Honorable Chad Wolf
Acting Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Acting Secretary Wolf:

I write today to request documents regarding the actions of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to expand protections for historic monuments, memorials, statues, and federal facilities. To be clear, I oppose the unlawful destruction of federal property. However, I would like to understand why Federal Protective Service (FPS) personnel are not adequate to carry out the task of protecting federal property, as well as the operational concerns that have spurred the extraordinary actions taken by the Department to expand protections for federal monuments and statues.

Document Request Regarding the Protecting American Communities Task Force

On June 26, President Trump issued an “Executive Order on Protecting American Monuments, Memorials, and Statues and Combating Recent Criminal Violence.” The Executive Order states:

“It is the policy of the United States to prosecute to the fullest extent permitted under federal law, and as appropriate, any person or any entity that destroys, damages, vandalizes, or desecrates a monument, memorial, or statue within the United States or otherwise vandalizes government property.”¹

The Executive Order also instructs that:

“The Attorney General shall prioritize within the Department of Justice the investigation and prosecution of matters described in subsections 2(a), (b), and (c) of this order. The Attorney General shall take all appropriate enforcement action against individuals and organizations found to have violated federal law through these investigations.”²

¹ *Executive Order on Protecting American Monuments, Memorials, and Statues and Combating Recent Criminal Violence*, WHITE HOUSE, June 26, 2020, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/executive-order-protecting-american-monuments-memorials-statues-combating-recent-criminal-violence/> (hereinafter *Executive Order*).

² *Id.*

On July 1, you announced the creation of the Protecting American Communities Task Force (PACT), which is to be “a special task force to coordinate Departmental law enforcement agency assets in protecting our nation’s historic monuments, memorials, statues, and federal facilities.” You stated that the creation of the PACT ““is answering the President’s call to use our law enforcement personnel across the country to protect our historic landmarks.”” You also stated, ““As we approach the July 4th have directed the deployment and pre-positioning of Rapid Deployment Teams (RDT) across the country to respond to potential threats to facilities and property.””³

Last Thursday, my staff sought additional information about the PACT and about plans to deploy law enforcement assets to protect monuments, memorials, statues, and federal facilities. While I appreciate the briefings that were provided by both DHS and FPS, neither agency was able to provide even basic information about the number of employees who will be assigned to this effort or the taxpayer money that will be expended on it. This basic information should have been available given that the Department announced it would be deploying Rapid Deployment Teams in advance of the 4th of July holiday.

I request that you provide by July 13, 2020, all documents from June 26 through the present referring or relating to:

1. The creation of the PACT, including but not limited to any requests from any source for additional resources to protect monuments, memorials, statues, and federal facilities, and any assessments from any source identifying the need for additional resources to protect such items;
2. The deployment and pre-positioning of Rapid Deployment Teams, including:
 - a. the number of teams created;
 - b. the duty locations to which each team has been deployed, as well as the specific monuments, memorials, statues, and federal facilities each team has guarded;
 - c. the number of personnel on each team and the agencies from which each team member was drawn;
 - d. the cost of deploying each team and the budget source from which all costs will be paid;
 - e. the activities carried out by each such team;
 - f. the rules of engagement for each team with the public;
 - g. all training programs related to the protection of monuments, memorials, statues, and federal facilities in which team members participated prior to their assignment to a Rapid Deployment Team, as well as copies of all training materials provided to team members prior to their assignment;
 - h. all planned future deployments; and
3. All policies and guidance regarding the creation and deployment of Rapid Deployment Teams.

Document Request Regarding Extremist Involvement in Protest Activity

Both the President’s Executive Order and your statement claimed that there are extremist groups involved in destroying federal property and even attempting to incite the overthrow of the U.S. government. For example, the President’s Executive Order states:

³ *Press Release: DHS Announces New Task Force to Protect American Monuments, Memorials, and Statues*, DEPT. OF HOMELAND SECURITY, July 1, 2020, <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2020/07/01/dhs-announces-new-task-force-protect-american-monuments-memorials-and-statues> (hereinafter *DHS Press Release*).

“Over the last 5 weeks, there has been a sustained assault on the life and property of civilians, law enforcement officers, government property, and revered American monuments such as the Lincoln Memorial. Many of the rioters, arsonists, and left-wing extremists who have carried out and supported these acts have explicitly identified themselves with ideologies—such as Marxism—that call for the destruction of the United States system of government.”⁴

The Executive Order also claims:

“Anarchists and left-wing extremists have sought to advance a fringe ideology that paints the United States of America as fundamentally unjust and have sought to impose that ideology on Americans through violence and mob intimidation.”⁵

Similarly, in your statement announcing the creation of the PACT, you said:

“We won’t stand idly by while violent anarchists and rioters seek not only to vandalize and destroy the symbols of our nation, but to disrupt law and order and sow chaos in our communities.”⁶

It is critical that the Committee receive and understand the available intelligence on the extent of extremist involvement in recent protests. This is all the more urgent as Director James Murray of the Secret Service indicated during a briefing he provided to me last month that the Secret Service had no actionable intelligence regarding any ideologically motivated groups, whether right- or left-leaning, infiltrating the crowd at Lafayette Square on June 1, and that he had had no conversations about the ideological leanings of any of the groups assembled at Lafayette Square that day.

In an effort to obtain further information on this matter, on July 1, I wrote to Director Murray to request a narrow set of documents from May 28 through the present pertaining to the protests at Lafayette Square on June 1, including all documents referring or relating to “[t]he involvement of any extremist or foreign organization in any aspect of protests at Lafayette Square.”⁷ In addition to the items already requested, I request to receive by July 13 all documents referring or relating to any extremist involvement in any protest activity in the U.S. from January 1, 2020, to the present.

I thank you for your urgent attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



BENNIE G. THOMPSON
Chairman

⁴ *Executive Order*, *supra* note 1.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *DHS Press Release*, *supra* note 3.

⁷ Letter from Bennie G. Thompson, Chairman, Committee on Homeland Security, to James Murray, Director, U.S. Secret Service, July 1, 2020.