



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

August 6, 2020

The Honorable William Barr
Attorney General
Department of Justice
Washington DC

The Honorable Chad Wolf
Acting Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
Washington DC

Dear Attorney General Barr and Acting Secretary Wolf:

For the past two months Portland, Oregon has experienced nightly violence from rioters who are targeting law enforcement and federal buildings, including the Mark O. Hatfield Federal Courthouse. As much of the violence occurred in the vicinity of the federal courthouse and damage to the facility was mounting, the Department of Homeland Security deployed additional personnel to bolster security to the courthouse and other federal buildings in the vicinity, which is consistent with the Department's authority under 40 U.S.C. § 1315 and responsibilities prescribed by Congress.

Rioters directly targeted law enforcement with violence, including improvised explosives, rocks, glass bottles, a sledgehammer, ball bearings and marbles launched from slingshots, and used lasers to temporarily, and potentially permanently, blind the eyes of officers. I support peaceful protests, but this is not that. It is my understanding that over 245 law enforcement officers have been injured, including several who have sustained serious injuries. Just as all use of force cases by federal officers are and should be reviewed, cases of violent attacks on law enforcement must also be investigated, and the perpetrators must be brought to justice. As former Vice President Joe Biden said, the "arsonists and anarchists should be prosecuted."

The United States has a long history of law enforcement agencies supporting each other. This is particularly true in the post 9/11 environment. Acting Secretary Wolf has been clear that prior to surging federal resources to Portland, DHS requested assistance and coordination with state and local officials and law enforcement to address the violent rioters. Those requests were denied.

Instead, Portland officials carried out a smear campaign against federal officials, dismissed calls to address the violence, and passed resolutions preventing local police from providing any assistance, coordination, or information with federal counterparts. This lack of cooperation made a difficult situation worse and may have further exposed federal personnel and facilities to violent attacks, putting politics over American lives.

As of July 29, 2020, a joint security plan was reportedly finalized between DHS, the Department of Justice and the Oregon State Police, in which the state police agreed to deploy additional forces to Portland to assist with securing the area around the federal courthouse. Despite media reports that this action has ended the violent riots, it is my understanding that the violence has continued to occur around the federal courthouse, and federal officers have continued to be targeted with fireworks, lasers, and projectiles.

As your departments review the violent rioting that has occurred in Portland, I am requesting you conduct a joint investigation into the breakdown of cooperation, mutual assistance and information sharing by state and local law enforcement with their federal counterparts in Portland, Oregon between May 29, 2020 and July 29, 2020. Furthermore, I request that you provide to Congress a full assessment of the injuries to federal personnel caused by violent rioters while on duty in Portland during this same time period, as well as an accounting of the damage done to federal facilities.

It is vital that a thorough investigation be conducted into the violent actors that have disrupted a peaceful protest movement, caused significant damage to a federal courthouse, and caused injury to hundreds of law enforcement officers. As part of this investigation, I urge you to ensure that all security footage be maintained and nightly reports on violent incidents and the use of force be collected. To the greatest extent possible, while not endangering law enforcement operations, it is important that information be shared with the public.

Thank you for your service and your continued commitment to carrying out the vital missions of your departments. I look forward to receiving a briefing on the results of your investigations into the violence in Portland and the problematic lack of state and local police support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mike Rogers", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mike D. Rogers
Ranking Member