

US Park Police chief defends unconstitutional June 1 assault on protesters outside the White House

By Jacob Crosse
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On Tuesday, Acting US Park Police Chief Gregory Monahan and D.C. National Guard major Adam DeMarco testified in front of the House Natural Resources Committee regarding the June 1 military-police rampage against peaceful protesters gathered in Lafayette Square, across from the White House in Washington, D.C.

The police assault and President Donald Trump’s speech from the Rose Garden—in which he declared himself the president of “Law and Order” and threatened to illegally deploy the military against protesters across the country—the WSWS noted at the time, “...will live in infamy as the beginning of a coup d’état by a criminal administration.”

These words remain as true today as they were nearly two months ago when they were written, as plotting continues within the Trump administration to overturn the US Constitution, and federal forces have been deployed to assault and arrest protesters in Portland and in other major cities.

In violation of the First Amendment, on June 1, Trump directed Attorney General William Barr to clear Lafayette Square of any protesters, well before the start of DC’s 7 p.m. curfew, implemented that day by Democratic mayor Muriel Bowser. In addition to serving as an example the methods the ruling class is prepared to use in order to maintain power, the assault allowed Trump to pose for a photo-op with a Bible in front of St. John’s Church shortly after the curfew began.

Prior to the police assault, thousands of protesters had gathered in the park, as they had throughout the weekend, to protest the police murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Video, eyewitness

accounts, including that of DeMarco, unequivocally confirm that the multitudes of multiracial and multiethnic protesters gathered in the park were peaceful throughout the day and up until the police assault.

This however did not deter Monahan, and every single Republican on the committee who questioned him, from framing the protesters as violent aggressors and “bad actors” while declaring the police were simply innocent bystanders protecting themselves while providing “public safety.”

Monahan disputed multiple accounts, and overwhelming evidence, that the decision by park police to begin “clearing out” the park before curfew was motivated by Trump’s yearning to stage a photo-op in front of the church, stating, “there is 100 percent zero correlation between our operation and the president’s visit to the church.”

Normally, radio logs are kept that would provide evidence to support Monahan’s claims that he was not ordered to clear the park and instead acted on his own accord. However, Monahan revealed to Congress that no “administrative,” that is senior level, audio transmissions were recorded during June 1, or for nearly two years prior. Allegedly, a new “digital” radio system was installed in Sept 2018, and since then every “special event” that park police have participated in has not been recorded.

The error was conveniently “discovered” by park police on June 10. No one on the committee asked Monahan why it took so long to discover the “error” or if “administrative” written logs had been maintained for previous events. Monahan advised the committee that written logs were kept during the events of June 1.

However, he would not commit to providing the logs to the committee until he consulted with Department of Interior lawyers.

Attempting to justify his officers' unyielding assault on peaceful demonstrators, Monahan testified that the protests outside the White House were "one of the most violent protests that I've been a part of in my 23 years." Monahan testified that 50 officers were injured between May 28 and June 1. Monahan's own internal reports confirm that only one injury was suffered by park police that day; a lone officer was punched in the face after police began their unprovoked and illegal assault.

Throughout his testimony, Monahan remained steadfast in his appraisal of police officers exhibiting "tremendous restraint" even as video clips were played repeatedly showing police assaulting passive protesters. When presented with a clip of Park Police officers attacking an Australian Channel 7 crew, Monahan replied that "the video shows a moment in time" and that he could not comment, further stating that it would be "inappropriate" for him to comment during "an ongoing investigation."

Monahan was questioned by Representative Jared Huffman, a Democrat from California, about the audio warnings given to protesters to disperse. Monahan had previously testified that police had used a Long Range Acoustic Device (LRAD) to make the announcements. Huffman played a video, taken by the *Washington Post*, of the first warning. The audio is indecipherable over the noise of the crowd; however, Monahan testified that he "could hear it."

DeMarco disputed Monahan's account that the warnings were audible to protesters or that they were cognizant of the request. DeMarco testified that he observed Park Police utilizing a "handheld megaphone," which DeMarco noted he could barely hear, "even though I was standing 30 yards away from it." The liaison between the National Guard and the Park Police also testified that he was "surprised" once he did hear the first barely audible announcement because he knew that "the curfew didn't start until 7 p.m."

DeMarco repeated much of his written statement that was released yesterday to the committee. He rejected Monahan's assessment that the protesters were violent, testifying that, "at no time" did he "feel threatened by

the protesters or assess them to be violent." DeMarco frequently cited Army field manuals and doctrine in making his assessments.

DeMarco did, however, agree with the committee members that protesters had engaged in "riots" the previous days and that the National Guard had been deployed to "secure and expand the security perimeter" which included the construction of a security fence.

Far from warning the working class of the impending danger, Tuesday's testimony represents a lesson in the tactical differences within the ruling class, and the two parties, as to how to best utilize the police and military agencies to thwart the development of a revolutionary movement of workers and youth against police murder.

The figures of Monahan, a 23-year veteran police officer and DeMarco, a thrice-deployed soldier, failed Democratic candidate for the House of Representatives in 2018 and an associate for Booz Allen Hamilton at the Defense Intelligence Agency, encapsulate the choice offered by the ruling class to workers in November's election: either the fascist Trump or the lifelong servant of the military-industrial complex, Biden.

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