



News Releases

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NATIONAL MALL CRIMES EXPOSE U.S. PARK POLICE OFFICER SHORTAGE —

Warnings by Former-Chief Teresa Chambers Proving Prophetic

Washington, DC — The recent series of crimes on the National Mall underscore warnings raised in December 2003 by then-Chief Teresa Chambers about the effects of staff shortages in the U.S. Park Police, according to Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER). Chambers, who contended that the Park Police was not adequately staffed to meet its law enforcement obligations in the nation's capital, was fired for confirming those conditions in an interview with *The Washington Post*, a termination she is still seeking to overturn.

The U.S. Park Police, the oldest uniformed federal police force inaugurated by President George Washington, now has wide-ranging anti-terrorism duties, including evacuation planning for the Statue of Liberty and providing escort duties for Vice-President Dick Cheney. The U.S. Park Police is also responsible for patrolling the National Mall, including such icons as the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument, as well as numerous other parks and five major parkways in the D.C. metro area.

In an April 2000 Report to Congress, the National Park Service estimated it needed 806 officers for its Park Police Force. At the time of that report there were approximately 638 sworn officers:

- Today, there is the same number of Park Police officers (621) as when Chambers was chief;
- Budget shortfalls led to the cancellation earlier this month of a class of officer cadets that was scheduled to begin training last week, according to the Fraternal Order of Police; and
- Only six officers were on the Mall on the evening of July 11th, in the height of the summer tourist season, when two sets of robberies (and a sexual assault) occurred, but two of those officers were under orders to be fixed sentries, not in positions to patrol or respond to incidents.

Following the 9/11 attacks, then-Interior Secretary Gale Norton ordered Park Police officers to maintain fixed positions on the Mall. In the fall of 2003, the Chair of the Fraternal Order of Police chapter representing the Park Police, Leon ("Jeff") Capps wrote to Secretary Norton protesting that the fixed postings came at the expense of visitor safety. Capps never received a response to his letter.

"The case of Chief Chambers illustrates how political appointees have micro-managed law enforcement operations, putting park visitors and even our national icons at risk," stated PEER Executive Director

Jeff Ruch, whose organization is leading Teresa Chambers' challenge to her July 2004 removal. "The Bush administration hired Chief Chambers after a nationwide search to find the best candidate to bring the Park Police into the 21st Century; it should be listening to her."

The July attacks on the National Mall follow a series of other robberies this May. In addition, this week, D.C. Police Chief Charles Ramsey has declared a "law enforcement emergency," due to outbreaks of crime throughout the city.