

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 4, 2020

The Honorable Mark T. Esper
Secretary
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Esper:

Earlier this week, the country watched in horror as U.S. military personnel and federal law enforcement were ordered to shut down peaceful protests in our nation's capital. As tear gas and rubber bullets were being fired at peaceful protesters in Lafayette Park, approximately 1,600 additional troops were staging at military installations near the District of Columbia in anticipation of the President's possible invocation of the Insurrection Act.

The President's use of military force against American citizens peacefully protesting is plainly unconstitutional. Now, we have learned that after initially ordering these troops to return to their home bases, you have reversed your decision and ordered them to remain. Not later than June 8, we request an explanation of your initial decision and subsequent reversal, including what specific facts on the ground changed and whether you were ordered by the White House to reverse course.

To add insult to injury, the American people will have to foot the bill for these violations of their First Amendment rights. We request that the Department report to Congress not later than June 8 the total cost of staging U.S. military personnel and equipment, excluding the National Guard, at bases in the National Capital Region to date and an estimate of the ongoing cost per day to maintain this deployment.

Thank you for your immediate attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

/s/Chris Van Hollen

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

/s/Benjamin L. Cardin

Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator

/s/Patrick Leahy

Patrick Leahy
United States Senator

/s/Edward J. Markey

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

/s/Ron Wyden

Ron Wyden
United States Senator

/s/Mazie K. Hirono

Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator

/s/Joe Manchin III

Joe Manchin III
United States Senator