FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 9, 2021

My office is releasing today our report addressing the actions of the U.S. Park Police (USPP) to disperse protesters in and around Lafayette Park in Washington, DC, on June 1, 2020.

This report, which we anticipate is the first of a number of projects examining aspects of the events of June 1, focuses on what occurred from an operational perspective—namely, when and how the USPP, in coordination with its law enforcement partners, made the decision to clear the park, and how it developed and executed its plan to do so. Although we do not have oversight authority over the USPP’s law enforcement partners, we obtained information from them throughout our review, particularly when doing so would provide us with insight into the USPP’s own activities.

Over the course of this review, our career investigative staff conducted extensive witness interviews, reviewed video footage from numerous vantage points, listened to radio transmissions from multiple law enforcement entities, and examined evidence including emails, text messages, telephone records, procurement documents, and other related materials.

This report presents a thorough, independent examination of that evidence to assess the USPP’s decision making and operations, including a detailed timeline of relevant actions and an analysis of whether the USPP’s actions complied with governing policies. The evidence we reviewed showed that the USPP cleared the park to allow a contractor to safely install antiscale fencing in response to destruction of Federal property and injury to officers that occurred on May 30 and May 31. Moreover, the evidence established that relevant USPP officials had made those decisions and had begun implementing the operational plan several hours before they knew of a potential Presidential visit to the park, which occurred later that day. As such, we determined that the evidence did not support a finding that the USPP cleared the park on June 1, 2020, so that then President Trump could enter the park.

We also found weaknesses with the operation to clear the park, including the U.S. Secret Service’s deployment before the USPP had begun its dispersal warnings and the USPP’s failure to provide dispersal warnings that were loud enough for everyone to hear and that told protesters where to exit before the clearing operation began. We make two recommendations to the USPP to improve its handling of future engagements of this type, and the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) stated that it will implement changes in accordance with our recommendations. We believe that if the DOI implements the recommendations from our review of the events of June 1 in Lafayette Park to future activities, USPP efforts to protect these locations and those who visit them will improve for similar operations.
This report does not address allegations of individual use-of-force incidents, as those are the subject of separate inquiries as well as ongoing lawsuits. We will continue to provide independent, objective oversight of the DOI’s activities to support it in improving its programs and procedures and specifically note that we anticipate conducting additional work pertaining to law enforcement operations, including projects addressing the DOI’s use of tasers, body-worn cameras, and radio communications.

Mark Lee Greenblatt
Inspector General
U.S. Department of the Interior