



Public Statement

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Statement Regarding Video of WSP Personnel Filmed at Recent Protest

Olympia, WA - The Washington State Patrol (WSP) offers our heartfelt condolences and organizational humility in regard to the tragic and wholly unnecessary death of Mr. George Floyd. An act of cruel disregard took his life, injured his family, and harmed this country. His death also laid bare long simmering challenges between law enforcement and communities of color. Our hope is that we can find ways to improve services and relationships and the lessons of Mr. Floyd's tragic death are never lost.

With that said, WSP must offer a heartfelt apology for verbiage used by one of our troopers responding to a protest in Seattle. A video posted on social media shows one of our rapid deployment team leaders telling the men and women under his command not to "kill 'em" but "hit 'em hard." We apologize for the poor choice of words by one our team leaders preparing his troopers for a possibly confrontational situation and recognize the hurt and confusion it has caused.

Make no mistake, we share in the appropriate outrage people are feeling and expressing about what happened in Minneapolis. We are aware of the tensions between law enforcement and communities of color, and recognize the importance of our words and actions. Part of our job is to respect, honor, and defend the rights of free speech and peaceful protest every single day. We also have a unique role in responding to crisis situations where some people have or may act unlawfully and take advantage of any righteous outrage. Physical force is not our primary or desired tactic when crowd response needs arise. Any use of force is calibrated with an assessment of what is necessary, reasonable, and proportionate to the given situation.

The team leader was preparing his team for a specific incident with protestors that were behaving aggressively, unsafely, and unlawfully. A "push" maneuver was deemed necessary where we actively push aggressive, non-compliant, and threatening protestors away from a designated area. That type of physicality takes courage and focus as well as balance and restraint. The team leader's motivation was to guide his team through a safe and effective maneuver. Unfortunately, that was eclipsed by his word choice.

Both WSP and the trooper are accountable for what we say and do and the matter is being investigated. We hope the public will accept our apology and we ask for grace and understanding as our troopers are serving in tense situations of danger and difficulty. They are doing so with courage, commitment and compassion, but not always with perfection.

We apologize if this regrettable moment added in any way to the strain felt by those we are serving in these difficult times. We will continue to faithfully serve the public and always aspire to be worthy of their trust in all we do and say.

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