



Media Release

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Washington State Patrol Chief Responds to Recent Protests

Shelton, WA- Chief John R. Batiste of the Washington State Patrol spoke to assembled reporters for over an hour at a Friday morning press conference on the growing national concerns over policing strategies, appropriate use of force, and the impacts of bias in law enforcement.

Responding to criticism of response tactics and verbiage used by WSP in recent protests in Seattle and other parts of the state, Chief Batiste began his comments by expressing his outrage over the killing of George Floyd while in police custody. He expressed his pain as a citizen, his shock as a member of law enforcement, and his horror as a black American. "As a father and a grandfather, that could have been me. That could have been my child. That could have been my grandchild," he said.

Focusing on transparency and accountability, WSP was also represented by: Captain Mark Tegard for questions regarding training, Captain Jason Ashley for questions regarding recruitment efforts of women and minorities, Captain Tyler Drake for questions regarding public complaints and accountability, Captain Neil Weaver for questions regarding governmental relations, Lieutenant Rob Brusseau for questions on the agency's Rapid Deployment Force (the unit specifically trained for all hazards response including crowd control), academy instructor Corporal Mitch Bauer for questions on use of force, Mr. Bob Maki for questions regarding budget and expenditures during recent deployments, as well as Ms. Christina Sanders from Washington State University regarding questions on WSU's ongoing study of WSP traffic stops and searches with regard to any evidence and remedy of implicit bias issues.

Lt. Brusseau provided an overview of the Rapid Deployment Force, its purpose, personnel, tactics, and equipment. Used at the invitation and in support of local law enforcement agencies, the RDF is a statewide team tasked with responding to all hazards, natural or manmade. It is often used in support of smaller law enforcement agencies who do not have the personnel resources needed for rapid response to large scale disruptive events.

According to Lt Brusseau, "Our hope is to show the public what, how, and why we do our jobs."

"We have had this force in place, though differently named, for the 40 plus years I have been a part of the State Patrol and I could not be prouder of them," said Chief Batiste. Though the name has changed, the mission has remained the same - respond as needed to dangers threatening life, property and peace in Washington.

Photos of the RDF in the field, demonstrating tactics for media in today's press conference, as well as Chief Batiste and Lt Brusseau addressing the audience can be found by clicking [here](#). WSP will release video of the comments and RDF demonstration as well as video taken by RDF videographers of recent deployments in the coming days.

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