



U.S. Department of Justice

Office of the Deputy Attorney General

Washington, D.C. 20530

August 12, 2026

Council of the District of Columbia
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW,
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Councilmembers,

I am not surprised that your recent letter to state governors regarding the National Guard feigns ignorance of the historic public safety strides made in our Nation's capital since August 11, 2025. I am surprised and saddened, however, that you would show such callousness—instead of compassion and care—toward your constituents, who now live in a city with far less violence and fear thanks to the National Guard and the D.C. Safe and Beautiful Task Force (the “Task Force”). Let me be clear, your council has no power to demand that governors remove their brave men and women from serving in uniform in our Nation's capital. Your politically-motivated letter is impotent theatrics not worth the paper it's written on, and D.C. is a much safer place no matter what you say. Because you refuse to speak the truth about the life-preserving work of the Task Force, the truth will speak for itself.

For far too long, violence became an epidemic in D.C., with residents and visitors facing almost unbelievable homicide rates. Murder became commonplace and, tragically, expected. The situation became so dire that, in August 2023, D.C. Councilmember Trayon White—ironically, a signatory to your letter to the governors—publicly declared that D.C. was “clearly in a war zone,” and suggested deployment of the National Guard to stem the violence.¹ “One of the biggest thing[s] they could provide is presence,” White said. “The issue right now in our community is that you hear it over and over again, we don't have enough officers. We don't have enough resources.”² After White's remarks, the city continued to experience the horrific consequences of this public safety crisis, with bloody month after bloody month. At the same time, carjackings and other violent crimes also skyrocketed in D.C.—and there is substantial reason to believe that crime was being undercounted.³

¹ Kate Ryan, ‘We are clearly in a war zone’: DC Council member calls on National Guard to fight city violence, (Aug. 9, 2023), <https://wtop.com/dc/2023/08/we-are-clearly-in-a-war-zone-dc-council-member-calls-on-national-guard-to-fight-city-violence/>.

² *Id.*

³ On July 28, 2026, the Office of the Inspector General for the District of Columbia issued a report finding that “MPD's crime reporting controls broke down significantly” between 2015 and 2025. *Inspection Report: The Metropolitan Police Department's Crime Data Reporting Processes and Data Reliability Controls*, Office of the Inspector General, July 28, 2026, https://oig.dc.gov/sites/default/files/Reports/DCOIG_Report_26-E-03-FA0.pdf.

Notably, directly coinciding with the assistance of the National Guard, the murder rate dropped substantially. To date, D.C. has seen the largest reduction in violent crime in the history of the city, record safety and security for residents and tourists alike, the complete rehabilitation and beautification of the city's history, monuments, and public spaces, and a total revitalization of the capital's commercial and downtown regions.

You might pretend violent crime isn't down in D.C. or act like the cause is unknown.⁴ But the public knows the city is safer. And honest people know why: on August 11, 2025, President Trump declared a crime emergency in D.C. and directed significant federal resources to protect life and liberty in our Nation's capital.⁵ The results have been historic drops in violence. The National Guard has played a pivotal role in that effort as part of the Task Force by increasing officer visibility, supporting life-saving law enforcement operations, protecting critical infrastructure, and providing reassurance to all law-abiding people. Thanks to courageous and steadfast support from National Guard units, Task Force members have conducted thousands of arrests, located lost and missing children, and taken substantial numbers of illegal firearms off the city's streets. The National Guard has personally intervened in numerous assaults and provided medical aid on innumerable occasions, including repeatedly administering life-saving NARCAN to citizens in peril.

The men and women of the National Guard represent the best our country has to offer. They are serving selflessly, away from their homes and families, to restore safety to our Nation's capital and ensure residents, workers, and tourists alike can enjoy the beauty this city has to offer. While you slander these men and women as "outside military forces," I refer to them as true American heroes.

I am proud to stand with President Trump to ensure the security and beauty of our Nation's capital, and welcome the D.C. Council's support in that mission. Regardless, the D.C. Council has no role in managing the brave men and women protecting our Nation's capital. You should withdraw your letters and dedicate your remaining time in public service to correcting D.C.'s laws to ensure criminals are punished and the public is protected—not the other way around. My office is available to assist you in this regard.

Sincerely,



Colin M. McDonald
Office of the Deputy Attorney General

⁴ Despite the implication in your letter, the marked decline in crime is not because the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) has replenished its ranks. On the contrary, in its 2025 annual report, MPD identified the "continued downward slide in sworn staffing" as a "persistent obstacle to [its] ability to serve the District of Columbia at full strength," and sounded the alarm that "fiscal year 2025 marked the seventh year in a row with separations outpacing new hires." *Annual Report 2025*, MPD, at *24, available at https://mpdc.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/mpdc/page_content/attachments/AR%202025_lowres.pdf.

⁵ Exec. Order No. 14,333, 90 Fed. Reg. 39,301 (Aug. 11, 2025).