

## **STATEMENT ON THE KILLING OF GEORGE FLOYD, PROTESTS IN THE UNITED STATES AND THE NEED FOR TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN RELATED MILITARY DEPLOYMENTS**

*June 10, 2020* - Transparency International – Defense & Security stands in solidarity with those demanding justice, equality, accountability and an end to racism worldwide following the killing of George Floyd while in the custody of police officers in Minneapolis on May 25.

In response to the resulting protests seen across the United States, the National Guard has been activated in 23 states throughout the country to assist local law enforcement agencies in the policing of protests, while some active duty military units were temporarily deployed to the National Capitol Region to potentially assist federal authorities. On June 2, the president announced he was "dispatching thousands and thousands of heavily armed soldiers, military personnel, and law enforcement officers to stop the rioting, looting, vandalism, assaults, and the wanton destruction of property". According to news reports, 17,000 National Guard members had been deployed, approximately the same number as active-duty US troops currently serving in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. This is in addition to 45,000 members of the National Guard who have already been deployed across all 50 states in response to the COVID-19 crisis.

The challenges and responsibilities faced by the armed forces in complex times are significant as they seek to protect their fellow citizens as well as prevent the violence and property damage that have occurred in some metropolitan areas. The statements by a number of current and former military leaders reminding servicemembers of the importance of American values and their oath to support and defend the Constitution and the citizens whom they serve send an important message.

It is during times such as these that transparency and oversight matter most to ensure that actions undertaken are accountable to the public. Some of these deployments present challenges in terms of protecting the right to peaceful protests alongside the duty to protect lives and livelihoods.

After days of scrutiny over the militarization of the police response, including the use of National Guard personnel to forcibly clear Lafayette Square of peaceful protestors on June 1, Secretary of Defense Mark Esper and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Mark Milley appear to have refused a request to testify to the House Armed Services Committee. This response shows a disregard to the key guiding principles of transparency, oversight and accountability, as enshrined in the constitutional system of checks and balances.

Transparency International – Defense & Security calls on all governments around the world to instil greater transparency in all aspects of civil-military relations and to ensure responsible use of military by political leaders. To the government of the United States, we make the following recommendations based on established best practice in the defense and security sectors:

- Ensure that all law enforcement agencies responding to protests, including components of the military when performing law enforcement duties, receive additional training and facilitate the right of peaceful public assembly.
- Commit to the principles of transparency and accountability and ensure that Secretary of Defense Mark Esper and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Mark Milley fulfil all oversight requirements.
- Resist any inclination by those who lead the security sector to limit engagement with citizens in response to this crisis. Trust can only be enhanced through more interaction, not less.

Transparency International – Defense & Security strongly encourages greater transparency and accountability in all aspects of relations between the military and civil society. The use of security forces must not infringe on the public's First Amendment rights of peaceful assembly and freedom of speech. Respect for and protection of basic human rights is the only path to restoring much-needed trust in civil-military relations.

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*Transparency International – Defense & Security has worked for 15 years toward a world where governments and their armed forces operate in manner transparent and accountable to their citizenry. Transparency International - Defense & Security is a global programme of the Transparency International Movement with principle offices and representation in London, Washington DC and Brussels.*