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## On Portland's Rapid Response Team

**PORTLAND, OR:** For months, the City of Portland endured a sustained level of destruction and violence on our streets like never before. I'm not talking about peaceful protests; I'm talking about the riots that consistently ensued, night-after-night, under the cover of darkness, after the peaceful protesters had gone home. Night-after-night, local politicians celebrated the destruction of our City as if looting, arson, property damage, physical violence, and even murder were permissible and lawful First Amendment activities.

The Portland Police Bureau (PPB) Rank and File Officers including the Rapid Response Team (RRT) held the line. They put themselves in harm's way to restore order and peace when destruction and mayhem struck. Rather than acknowledging and thanking those officers, rather than prioritizing public safety and peace, politicians criticized the RRT, further fueling the fires in our City.

Our Rapid Response Team members were volunteers who received and applied specialized training to manage crowd and protest events safely and effectively with as little force as practical. **Our RRT volunteered for their duties because they truly believed in what they were doing—protecting our residents, our communities, and our City.**

But our Rapid Response Team members did not volunteer to have Molotov cocktails, fireworks, explosives, rocks, bottles, urine, feces, and other dangerous objects thrown at them. Nor did they volunteer to have threats of rape, murder, and assault on their families hurled at them. They did not volunteer to suffer serious injuries, to be subject to warrantless criticism and false allegations by elected officials, or to suffer through baseless complaints and lengthy investigations devoid of due process.

Yesterday, the entire Portland Police Bureau Rapid Response Team resigned from their voluntary positions. Until now, they have continued to come to work every day, exhausted and injured. The only glue holding the team together was their commitment, dedication, and integrity to serve their communities. But that glue dissolved when political venom demonized these public servants for doing exactly what they were tasked to do—restore peace and order in our City.

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When elected officials turned nightly violence into political banter for their own personal agendas, those politicized actions put Rapid Response Team members and public safety at risk. The reality is our dedicated RRT members have had enough and were left with no other alternative but to resign from their voluntary positions.

**If the Rapid Response Team members' resignation has highlighted anything, it's that the priorities of our elected officials have failed.** Roving gangs of black-clad rioters do not speak for the hundreds of thousands of residents and business owners of Portland who want a safe and clean city. Yet local politicians supported them. These rioters, bent on destruction, hijacked social and racial justice movements. Yet local politicians supported them. These rioters burned and looted our City. Yet local politicians supported them.

For instance, instead of recognizing the value of public safety, peace, and order, Commissioner Hardesty has used the occasion to promote a self-serving, anti-police, anti-public safety agenda. Instead of defending our communities and the business owners whose livelihoods were destroyed by the riots, she continues to endorse violence.

Plain and simple: Portlanders want our City back.

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*The Portland Police Association is an independent labor organization representing the Police Officers, Sergeants, Detectives, and Criminalists who work for the Portland Police Bureau and the 911 Dispatchers who work for the Bureau of Emergency Communication.*