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Use of Militia, National Guard, or Federal Armed Forces within the District of Columbia Prior to 2020

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Militia, National Guard, and federal armed forces have occasionally operated within the District of Columbia to respond to violence or anticipated violence. Based on a search of historical newspaper accounts, books, and other sources, CRS has identified 10 such instances prior to 2020:

1. 1814 – War of 1812;
2. 1857 – Know-Nothing Riots;
3. 1861-1865 – Civil War;
4. 1917 – World War I Homeland Defense;
5. 1919 – Washington D.C. Race Riots;
6. 1932 – Bonus Marchers;
7. 1967 – Vietnam War Dissent Demonstration;
8. 1968 – Martin Luther King Jr. Assassination Riots;
9. 1971 – May Day Protests; and
10. 2001 – Post 9/11 Homeland Defense Activities.

The set of events covered in this report does not include certain uses, such as natural disaster response, counterdrug operations, Weapons of Mass Destruction Civil Support Team operations, general crowd and traffic control support, most inaugural support, and ceremonial events.

The terminology used in this report is based on historical usage. *Militia* refers to military forces composed of armed citizens raised under the authority of their state, territory, or the District of Columbia. After the Civil War, many states renamed their organized militia forces as the *National Guard*, and this name was codified in law with the Militia Act of 1903. *Federal armed forces* refers to military forces raised under Congress’s constitutional authority to “raise and support Armies” and “to provide and maintain a Navy.”

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Lawrence Kapp
Specialist in Military
Personnel Policy

Alan Ott
Analyst in Defense and
Intelligence Personnel
Policy

David A. Blum
Research Librarian

Hibbah Kaileh
Research Assistant

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Introduction

This report provides information on 10 instances in which the militia, National Guard, or federal armed forces were used for operations within the geographic boundaries of Washington, D.C., due to violence or anticipated violence. Congress may find these cases helpful when considering the contemporary or future role of the National Guard and federal armed forces in the nation's capital.

CRS identified the selected events based on a search of newspaper accounts, books, and other historical sources, but this report should not be considered a comprehensive listing of such events. In this product, CRS does not offer deep historical context to these events or analysis that links these events to contemporary events. The selected events do not include certain uses, such as natural disaster response, counterdrug operations, Weapons of Mass Destruction Civil Support Team operations, general crowd and traffic control support, most inaugural support, and ceremonial events.¹

Terms

For the purpose of this report, the terms militia, National Guard, and federal armed forces have the following meanings based on statutory texts:

- *Militia* refers to armed forces composed of citizens, raised under the authority of their state, territory, or the District of Columbia. The Militia Act of May 8, 1792, provided in part:

That each and every free able-bodied white male citizen of the respective states, resident therein, who is or shall be of age of eighteen years, and under the age of forty-five years (except as is herein after excepted) shall severally and respectively be enrolled in the militia by the captain or commanding officer of the company, within whose bounds such citizen shall reside, and that within twelve months after the passing of this act.²

Members of the militia who trained regularly as part of militia units were sometimes referred to as the organized militia.³

¹ Counterdrug operations are authorized under 32 U.S.C. §112; see also District of Columbia National Guard (DCNG) Counterdrug Program, at <https://dc.ng.mil/About-Us/Counterdrug-Program/>. Examples of natural disaster response, Weapons of Mass Destruction Civil Support Team operations, general crowd and traffic control support, inaugural support and ceremonial events are available on the DCNG public affairs website, at <https://dc.ng.mil/Public-Affairs/News-Release/>; the DCNG history webpage, at <https://dc.ng.mil/About-Us/Heritage/History/Past-and-post-war/>; and the 2018 DCNG Annual Report, pp. 11-14, at <https://dc.ng.mil/Portals/26/DCNG%20Annual%20Report%202018.pdf>.

² Militia Act of 1792, ch. 33, 1 Stat. 271 (1792) (repealed 1903), available at <https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/l1/l1sl/l1sl-c2/l1sl-c2.pdf>. The militia concept, derived from a long-standing English tradition, existed in the American colonies prior to the adoption of the Constitution. The Constitution recognized the existence of the militia and gave the federal government limited authority over it, including the ability to call the militia into federal service in certain circumstances (Article I, §8, cls. 15, 16; Article 2, §2).

³ Current federal law maintains a distinction between the organized militia and the unorganized militia.

10 U.S.C. §246. Militia: composition and classes

(a) *The militia of the United States consists of all able-bodied males at least 17 years of age and, except as provided in section 313 of title 32, under 45 years of age who are, or who have made a declaration of intention to become, citizens of the United States and of female citizens of the United States who are members of the National Guard.*

(b) *The classes of the militia are-*

- *National Guard* is the term used, beginning in the late 19th century, to refer to the organized militia of the states, territories, and the District of Columbia. After the Civil War, many states renamed their organized militia forces as the National Guard. Congress adopted the term in the Militia Act of 1903:

That the militia shall consist of every able-bodied male citizen of the respective States, Territories, and the District of Columbia, and every able-bodied male of foreign birth who has declared his intention to become a citizen, who is more than eighteen and less than forty-five years of age, and shall be divided into two classes—the organized militia, to be known as the National Guard of the State, Territory, or District of Columbia, or by such other designations as may be given them by the laws of the respective States or Territories, and the remainder to be known as the Reserve Militia.⁴

- *Federal armed forces* refers to military forces raised under Congress’s constitutional authority to “raise and support Armies” and “to provide and maintain a Navy.”⁵ The Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, and Coast Guard constitute the federal armed forces today.⁶

The District of Columbia

The U.S. Constitution grants Congress exclusive legislative jurisdiction over a district meant to be the seat of the government of the United States.⁷ Congress had selected and acquired a district by 1789, but it did not assume legislative authority over it until the first D.C. *organic act* became law in 1801 (an organic act is legislation that confers the powers of government upon a territory).⁸ The act subdivided D.C. into two counties: Washington County, which included what is now Washington, D.C., and Alexandria County, which included what is now Arlington County, Virginia, approximately.⁹ Congress established the District of Columbia militia in 1803; in 1889 Congress repealed the 1803 legislation and replaced it with legislation that reorganized the District’s militia.¹⁰ The 1889 legislation is the source for the D.C. Code provisions that currently govern the District of Columbia National Guard (DCNG).¹¹ For additional information on the

(1) *the organized militia, which consists of the National Guard and the Naval Militia; and*

(2) *the unorganized militia, which consists of the members of the militia who are not members of the National Guard or the Naval Militia.*

⁴ 57 U.S. Cong., Sess II, Stat. 775, Ch. 196, §1, Jan 21, 1903, available at <https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/l1/l1sl/l1sl-c57/l1sl-c57.pdf>. See footnote 3 for current definition of militia.

⁵ U.S. Constitution, Article I, §8, cls. 12, 13.

⁶ 10 U.S.C. §101(a)(4).

⁷ U.S. Const., art. I, §8, cl. 17.

⁸ 6 U.S. Cong., Sess. II, Stat. 105, Ch. XV, §1, Feb 27, 1801, available at <https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/l1/l1sl/l1sl-c6/l1sl-c6.pdf>. Black’s Law Dictionary defines the term organic act as “A law that establishes an administrative agency or local government” (Black’s Law Dictionary 1705 (11th ed. 2019)).

⁹ 6 U.S. Cong., Sess. II, Stat. 105, Ch. XV, §1, Feb 27, 1801, §2, available at <https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/l1/l1sl/l1sl-c6/l1sl-c6.pdf>.

¹⁰ 7 U.S. Cong., Sess. II, Stat. 215, Ch. XX, §1, Mar 3, 1803, available at <https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/l1/l1sl/l1sl-c7/l1sl-c7.pdf>; 50 U.S. Cong, Sess. II, Stat. 772, Ch. 328, §1, Mar 1, 1889, available at <https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/l1/l1sl/l1sl-c50/l1sl-c50.pdf>.

¹¹ See generally, Code of the District of Columbia, Division VIII. General Laws, Title 49. Military, §§49-101 – 49-1101.20. The DCNG is analogous to a state’s organized militia. (32 U.S.C. §101(4), (6)). The President of the United States is the Commander-in-Chief of the DCNG. (D.C. Code §49-409).

DCNG, see CRS In Focus IF11768, *National Guard Civil Support in the District of Columbia*, by Lawrence Kapp, Alan Ott, and Michael A. Foster.

Identified Instances of Operations by Militia, National Guard, or Federal Armed Forces in the District of Columbia

1814 – War of 1812

On August 24, 1814, British military forces routed a U.S. force of approximately 5,000 soldiers, including militia, near the town of Bladensburg, MD.¹² The U.S. forces retreated through the District of Columbia and the pursuing British burned public buildings including the Capitol and the White House.¹³ According to the D.C. National Guard website:

The fledging D.C. Militia was tested during the War of 1812. Maryland and Virginia, pre-occupied with attacks on their own territory, were sluggish to send troops to D.C. The D.C. Militia, even when augmented by regular forces, was overwhelmed and ordered to withdraw. They watched the nation’s capital burn. After this incident, Congress took notice and increased the size and equipage of the D.C. Guard.¹⁴

¹² National Park Service, “Summer 1814: American troops flee in humiliation, leaving Washington exposed,” at <https://www.nps.gov/articles/bladensburg-races.htm>.

¹³ National Park Service, “Complete the destruction of the public buildings with the least possible delay,” at <https://www.nps.gov/articles/burning-the-capital.htm>.

¹⁴ District of Columbia National Guard, “Past and Post War,” at <https://dc.ng.mil/About-Us/Heritage/History/Past-and-post-war/>.

Figure I. British Capture of City of Washington



Source: Cundee, J. (1815) *Capture of the city of Washington*. Washington D.C. United States, 1815. London: J. & J. Cundee, Albion Press. [Photograph] Retrieved from the Library of Congress, at <https://www.loc.gov/item/2007683564/>.

1857 – Know-Nothing Riots

The *American Party*, sometimes known as the *Know-Nothing Party*, was an organization that emerged in the 1840s out of a secret organization and was known for its nativist and anti-immigrant agenda; there were also anti-slavery elements in the northern wing of the party.^{15, 16} The party sought to restrict political power to native-born Protestants, eliminate Catholics from public office, and extend naturalization laws from five years to 21 years. Members were required to be native-born Protestant citizens.¹⁷ Support for the Know-Nothing cause increased in the 1850s as immigration to the United States grew.¹⁸

¹⁵ Lorraine Boissoneault, “How the 19th-Century Know Nothing Party Reshaped American Politics,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, January 26, 2017, at <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/immigrants-conspiracies-and-secret-society-launched-american-nativism-180961915/>.

¹⁶ See “Platform of the American Party of Massachusetts,” at <https://www.loc.gov/resource/rbpe.06501500/?st=text>.

¹⁷ S. J. Ackerman, “A Riot in Washington,” *American History*, 2001, Vol. 32, 2, p57-58. There were various party platforms adopted by local and regional groups. A platform adopted by the “national council of the American Party” was published in *National Aegis*, March 5, 1856.

¹⁸ S. J. Ackerman, “A Riot in Washington,” *American History*, 2001, Vol. 32, 2, p. 58.

During a municipal election in June 1857 in Washington, D.C., the Know-Nothing party hired gangs to intimidate voters at the polls, a common practice at the time.¹⁹ On June 1, 1857, as voters lined up at the polling stations near Mount Vernon Square and Pennsylvania Avenue NW, they were attacked by street gangs such as the “Plug Uglies” and “Rip Raps” that had come into the city from Baltimore.²⁰ Local police were overwhelmed by the mobs.²¹ At the request of the mayor, President James Buchanan ordered a Marine detachment to help restore peace.²² Led by Captain A. B. Tyler, 115 Marines marched throughout the city and confronted the gangs. Colonel Archibald Henderson, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, was also on the scene in civilian clothes.

The Plugs had brought their stolen cannon to the polls. Bracing its wobbly wheel and loading it with rocks, nails, bullets, and other shrapnel, they aimed the weapon at the polling booth. Two of the rioters threatened to fire the cannon if Tyler didn't leave his position. "Then I will take your cannon," the captain snapped.

Meanwhile, Colonel Henderson, "dressed in citizen's dress," had found a place within the mob. He began edging his way toward the cannon and urged the rioters not to fire. Then he put himself in front of the cannon's mouth. "I approached it and placed my knee against it with a determination to prevent its being fired until the Marines could get to the place where I wished them to be," Henderson said later. Exploiting the cannon's wobbly wheel, he knocked it to one side. Luck, in the form of rain, was with Henderson that day. A rioter named Charlie Hurdle rushed forward and thrust his cigar into the cannon's touchhole, only to see it fizzle in the damp. With the Marine column safe from the weapon, Henderson slipped across the intersection and whispered to Captain Tyler, "It's time to take it."

One Marine company charged with fixed bayonets, with Henderson in its midst, carrying only his cane, crafted from the wood of a British warship he had battled during the War of 1812. The leathernecks scattered thugs and bystanders alike. The Plugs raced for the railroad, followed closely by Marines. Faced with armed troops instead of defenseless voters, the Plugs piled aboard their trains and headed back to Baltimore. On the way, they passed the southbound train bearing Major French's Flying Artillery from Fort McHenry, rushing to secure the capital.

The polls at the disturbed precincts reopened in the afternoon, and voting continued undisturbed. But five people had died and 15 were wounded, mainly peaceable citizens.²³

A contemporary news article indicates that the Plug Uglies fired pistols during the charge, and “the marines fired in two directions, one company discharged their pieces at those in command of the gun, and the other at the crowd at the northwest corner of Seventh and K streets.”²⁴ The use of force by the Marines that day was called into question, with one historian claiming that most of the actions by the Marines took place when no violence was going on.²⁵ The U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia prosecuted six riot leaders who had been captured, and all were convicted and sentenced to a year in jail and \$20 fines.²⁶

¹⁹ S. J. Ackerman, “A Riot in Washington,” *American History*, 2001, Vol. 32, 2, 58-59

²⁰ Richard Brownell, “The Election Day Riot of 1857,” *Boundary Stone*, February 28, 2017.

²¹ Richard Brownell, “The Election Day Riot of 1857,” *Boundary Stone*, February 28, 2017.

²² S. J. Ackerman, “A Riot in Washington,” *American History*, 2001, Vol. 32, 2, 60.

²³ S. J. Ackerman, “A Riot in Washington,” *American History*, 2001, Vol. 32, 2, 62-63.

²⁴ “The Election Riot at Washington,” *New York Daily Times*, June 3, 1857.

²⁵ Richard Brownell, “The Election Day Riot of 1857,” *Boundary Stone*, February 28, 2017. See also “The Election Riots,” *New York Daily Tribune*, August 22, 1857.

²⁶ S. J. Ackerman, “A Riot in Washington,” *American History*, 2001, Vol. 32, 2, 56-64.

Figure 2. Marines Firing during Know-Nothing Riot



Source: Whitehurst Gallery, photographer. (1857) *Scene of the Washington riot. The Marines firing upon the mob, having seized the cannon used by the rioters General Henderson urging the rioters not to fire; Dora and Clayton escaping from the wreck of the burning steamer.* Washington D.C., 1857. [New York: Frank Leslie] [Photograph] Retrieved from the Library of Congress, at <https://www.loc.gov/item/2018650488/>.

1861-1865 – Civil War

After the election of Abraham Lincoln, on November 6, 1860, but before he was inaugurated on March 4, 1861, seven states seceded from the United States.²⁷ Situated between Virginia and Maryland, both slave states, the District of Columbia was in a precarious position.²⁸ After consulting with President Buchanan, Brevet Lieutenant General Winfield Scott appointed Colonel Charles Stone to improve the defenses of Washington, and produced a militia force of “thirty-three companies of infantry and riflemen and two troops of cavalry [who] were on the lists of the District volunteer force; and all had been uniformed, equipped, and put under frequent drill.”²⁹

Federal armed forces were brought to the District as well:

Regular Army units of all arms—infantry, cavalry and artillery as well as Engineer Sappers and Miners—responded to [General Scott’s orders] and on February 12, the day before the electoral college met, they were guarding the principal government buildings—White House, Treasury, Capitol, Patent Office and Post Office. The next day they kept an unruly mob, composed of Maryland, District of Columbia and Virginia southern sympathizers, from disrupting the deliberations of the electoral college or creating mischief in general.... Inaugural day arrived and many were apprehensive. Riflemen were posted along the parade route and in the Capitol. Artillery, cavalry and various other military units took station at a variety of points along the route, but out of the citizens' view, to counter any possible mob

²⁷ South Carolina, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas.

²⁸ Although Maryland was a slave state, it did not secede from the Union like Virginia did. Maryland abolished slavery in November 1864. See Maryland State Archives, *A Guide to the History of Slavery in Maryland*, 2007, at https://msa.maryland.gov/msa/intromsa/pdf/slavery_pamphlet.pdf

²⁹ Elden Billings, “Military Activities in Washington in 1861,” *Records of the Columbia Historical Society*, Washington, D.C., 1960/1962, Vol. 60/62, 126.

violence. Unbeknownst to most of the spectators, local militiamen protected the inaugural platform.³⁰

While the inauguration of President Lincoln was completed without incident, the Civil War began on April 12, 1861, with the Confederate attack on Fort Sumter. Throughout the Civil War, federal armed forces, including militia units called into federal service, were a constant presence in the District of Columbia. A portion of these forces was dedicated to the defense of Washington, D.C., manning a series of forts and artillery batteries surrounding the capital.³¹

Figure 3. Union Soldiers in Front of Capitol



Source: (1861) *Civil War Troops*. Washington D.C. United States, 1861. [Photograph] Retrieved from the Library of Congress, at <https://www.loc.gov/item/2009631455/>.

³⁰ National Park Service, “Civil War Defense of Washington,” at https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/civilwar/hrs1-4.htm.

³¹ “On forested hills surrounding the nation's capital are the remnants of a complex system of Civil War fortifications. These strategic buttresses transformed the young capital into one of the world's most fortified cities. By 1865, 68 forts and 93 batteries armed with over 800 cannons encircled Washington, DC.” National Park Service, “Civil War Defenses of Washington, D.C.,” at <https://www.nps.gov/cwdw/index.htm>.

1917 – World War I Homeland Defense

According to the DCNG, “Fearing espionage, the D.C. National Guard was recalled to active duty seventeen days before the U.S. officially entered WWI to protect reservoirs and power plants around the city.”³² According to newspaper accounts from the time, the activation appears to have occurred in late March 1917 and consisted of several battalions, one of which was assigned to guard an aqueduct that delivered water to the District from Virginia.³³

1919 – Washington, D.C. Race Riots

In late June and early July 1919, “several attempted rapes of white women were reported in the District of Columbia and surrounding areas.”³⁴ Police were convinced that a single Black perpetrator was responsible, though many Whites believed “a premeditated epidemic of sexual assaults by blacks upon area white women was under way.”³⁵ Local newspapers sensationalized the allegations.³⁶ On July 19, a White mob that included off-duty military personnel (and perhaps recently discharged World War I soldiers in uniform) assaulted a number of Black men; the mob grew and attacks expanded the following night.³⁷ On July 21, Black residents took up arms to defend their neighborhoods.

Black residents suspected the target that night would be LeDroit Park, the prosperous black neighborhood next to Howard University. Two thousand black veterans and their compatriots formed a line of defense down Florida Avenue/U Street from 6th to 14th streets, facing south. They were armed.

³² District of Columbia National Guard website, “Past and Post War,” at <https://dc.ng.mil/About-Us/Heritage/History/Past-and-post-war/>.

³³ See The Washington Herald, “Colored Troops Called to Duty,” Washington, D.C. 26 March 1917, at <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045433/1917-03-26/ed-1/seq-1/> and The Washington Times, “Shoot to Kill, Order to Guard,” Washington, D.C., 12 April 1917, at <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84026749/1917-04-12/ed-1/seq-1/>.

³⁴ Clayton D. Laurie and Ronald H. Cole, *The Role of Federal Military Forces in Domestic Disorder, 1877-1945* (Washington, DC: United States Army Center of Military History, 1997), p. 282, available at <https://history.army.mil/catalog/pubs/30/30-15.html>.

³⁵ Clayton D. Laurie and Ronald H. Cole, *The Role of Federal Military Forces in Domestic Disorder, 1877-1945* (Washington, DC: United States Army Center of Military History, 1997), p. 282.

³⁶ See Gillian Brock, *Washington Post*, “The deadly race riot ‘aided and abetted’ by The Washington Post a century ago,” July 15, 2019, at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2019/07/15/deadly-race-riot-aided-abetted-by-washington-post-century-ago/>.

³⁷ Gillian Brock, *Washington Post*, “The deadly race riot ‘aided and abetted’ by The Washington Post a century ago,” July 15, 2019. “The participation of soldiers, sailors, and marines in attacks against the black populace on the nights of 20 and 21 July had been confirmed by many reports in the press and those presented to War and Navy Department officials.... Haan later denied that any soldiers still in the Army had any part in this mixup. He attributed the presence of men in uniform to the large number of recently discharged soldiers who were legally allowed to wear their Army uniforms.” Clayton D. Laurie and Ronald H. Cole, *The Role of Federal Military Forces in Domestic Disorder, 1877-1945* (Washington, DC: United States Army Center of Military History, 1997), p. 295. Note: the armistice for World War I was agreed on November 11, 1918. Over 2 million U.S. servicemembers would be shipped home from Europe during 1919, with the transfers hitting their peak in June 1919. Brian Neumann and Shane Makowicki, *The U.S. Army Campaigns of World War I: Occupation and Demobilization, 1918-1923*, (Washington, DC: United States Army Center for Military History, 2019) pp. 36-38.

As the sun set, Krugler wrote, skirmishes broke out. A white mob chased a black delivery driver; a band of black men boarded streetcars and assaulted uniformed Marines.... It continued like this through the short summer night.³⁸

President Woodrow Wilson directed federal armed forces to restore order. Major General William Haan, director of the Army's War Plans Division, employed a force of about 1,000 soldiers and Marines, 85 cavalrymen, and some military intelligence personnel.³⁹ According to authors Clayton D. Laurie and Ronald H. Cole:

With ample power at hand, Haan quickly set about to restore order in the district. Instead of acting simply in support of the district police, federal troops assumed primary responsibility for law enforcement. The creation of a unified command placed law enforcement forces under Army direction and control ... in general the saturation of trouble spots with federal troops quickly succeeded in restoring order. By Thursday, 24 July 1919, rioting in Washington, D.C., had ended, and the Army indicated its strong desire to return law enforcement responsibilities to the district police. Larger federal units left Washington, D.C., on 27 July, while a smaller Army detachment of thirty-five officers and men of the 63d Infantry remained in the city to support police forces until the following day, when they too were withdrawn.⁴⁰

1932 – Bonus Marchers⁴¹

In 1924, Congress approved bonuses for World War I veterans, payable in 1945. In 1932, in the midst of the Great Depression, Congressman Wright Patman introduced a bill to make the bonus payable immediately. Approximately 10,000 to 20,000 veterans arrived in Washington, D.C., from across the nation to pressure Congress to pass the bill, living in shantytowns they built near the Capitol and in Anacostia. The bill passed the House, but not the Senate.⁴² Congress adjourned, but the veterans remained and conducted demonstrations on the Capitol steps and in front of the White House. Police attempting to evict the protesters from vacant buildings were met with resistance and the Board of Commissioners of the District of Columbia requested military support from President Herbert Hoover. Secretary of War Patrick Hurley argued that the “mob defiance constituted insurrection and that the marchers represented the vanguard of a Communist revolution, [but] Hoover flatly refused to proclaim a state of insurrection or to declare martial law.”⁴³ Hoover did approve the use of federal armed forces to assist the police operations in a supporting role, but Army Chief of Staff General Douglas MacArthur deviated from these restrictions and had the military directly remove the marchers from the District. According to authors Laurie and Cole:

Led by a one-star general, a column of nearly 200 mounted cavalrymen, 300 infantrymen, and 5 tanks advanced southeast from the Ellipse, down Pennsylvania Avenue, toward 3d Street, Northwest, at the base of Capitol Hill.... Accompanying the column in a staff car,

³⁸ Gillian Brock, *Washington Post*, “The deadly race riot ‘aided and abetted’ by The Washington Post a century ago,” July 15, 2019. See also Clayton D. Laurie and Ronald H. Cole, *The Role of Federal Military Forces in Domestic Disorder, 1877-1945* (Washington, DC: United States Army Center of Military History, 1997), p. 283-84.

³⁹ Clayton D. Laurie and Ronald H. Cole, *The Role of Federal Military Forces in Domestic Disorder, 1877-1945* (Washington, DC: United States Army Center of Military History, 1997), p. 284.

⁴⁰ Laurie and Cole, *The Role of Federal Military Forces in Domestic Disorder, 1877-1945*, p. 284.

⁴¹ This section is adapted from the description on the Bonus March contained in Laurie and Cole, *The Role of Federal Military Forces in Domestic Disorder, 1877-1945*, pp. 367-390.

⁴² The bill was H.R. 7726 in the 72nd Congress. For more information, see <https://history.house.gov/Historical-Highlights/1901-1950/World-War-I-veterans-bonus-bill/>.

⁴³ Laurie and Cole, *The Role of Federal Military Forces in Domestic Disorder, 1877-1945*, p. 376.

Army Chief of Staff General Douglas MacArthur prepared to evict from the city a ragtag group of unemployed veterans known as the Bonus Expeditionary Force.⁴⁴

Soldiers used tear gas to disperse crowds of marchers and bystanders. Later, cavalry “struck with the flat of their sabers, while the infantry, arriving at the scene, prodded the crowd with bayonets.”⁴⁵ It is not clear why MacArthur exceeded his orders, but he appears to have shared Hurley’s belief that the marchers were infiltrated by communists intent on overthrowing the government.⁴⁶ MacArthur subsequently ignored orders from President Hoover forbidding him to cross the bridge to the Anacostia site where, though crowds harassed the troops en route, the troops cleared the final protesters’ location in what was ultimately a “bloodless” operation.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Laurie and Cole, *The Role of Federal Military Forces in Domestic Disorder, 1877-1945*, p. 367.

⁴⁵ Laurie and Cole, *The Role of Federal Military Forces in Domestic Disorder, 1877-1945*, p. 380.

⁴⁶ “Why MacArthur embarked on this course remains far from clear. He had confided his presidential ambitions to close friends and may have believed that a low-key form of military intervention, if it failed, would make him appear too weak and indecisive for the nation’s highest office. Believing the rumors and reports of Communist revolutionary intent, MacArthur may have seen a complete rout of the marchers as the best way to prevent an uprising then or in the future. Finally, he may have hoped to convince Congress that in a world rocked by depression, dictators, and revolutionaries the Army was crucial to internal stability and therefore merited increased appropriations” and “According to one biographer, ‘Once MacArthur was convinced that the affair was a Communist assault against the federal government, he acted with overzealous determination and reckless impulsiveness.’” Laurie and Cole, *The Role of Federal Military Forces in Domestic Disorder, 1877-1945*, pp. 377, 383.

⁴⁷ Laurie and Cole, *The Role of Federal Military Forces in Domestic Disorder, 1877-1945*, p. 386.

Figure 4. Tanks on Pennsylvania Avenue during Bonus March



Source: *Troops Called as Bonus Veterans Riot*. Washington D.C., 1932. [Photograph] Retrieved from the Library of Congress, at <https://www.loc.gov/item/2006676330/>.

1967 – Vietnam War Dissent Demonstration and Riot

On August 28, 1967, the National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam announced a planned demonstration to block the entrances to the Pentagon.⁴⁸ The plan for the protest included a rally at the Lincoln Memorial and a march across the Memorial Bridge to another rally at the Pentagon, followed by acts of civil disobedience.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Paul J. Scheips, *The Role of Federal Military Forces in Domestic Disorders, 1945–1992* (Washington, DC: United States Army Center of Military History, 2012) pp. 237, available at https://history.army.mil/html/books/030/30-20/cmh_pub_30-20.pdf.

⁴⁹ E. W. Kenworthy, "Thousands Reach Capital to Protest Vietnam War," *New York Times*, October 21, 1967. See also Scheips, *The Role of Federal Military Forces in Domestic Disorders, 1945–1992*, p. 243.

In anticipation of the event, there were 12,000 federal civilian and military personnel at the Pentagon and on call in the national capital area.⁵⁰ This included almost the entire DCNG (about 1,700 personnel).⁵¹ Plans published nine days before the event indicated that the DCNG would primarily work with police in the District performing crowd and traffic control, “but a 202-man force would accompany a riot-trained police reaction force, dressed similarly in field uniforms and steel helmets and carrying gas masks and weapons. Another 90 would guard several important government buildings in Washington.”⁵² The plans also indicated there would be three active duty Army battalions stationed at the Pentagon, along with four military police companies, additional military personnel to augment the Pentagon’s guard force, and a five battalion reaction force in the Washington area.⁵³ A brigade sized task force from the 82nd Airborne Division was moved to Andrews Air Force base shortly before the demonstration as well, and there was a Marine contingent located at Anacostia Naval Station.⁵⁴ The Army also infiltrated the demonstrators with undercover military intelligence agents in the cities where they assembled and conducted electronic surveillance during the protests.⁵⁵

On October 21, 1967, tens of thousands of demonstrators assembled near the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C.⁵⁶ There were a few arrests at the Lincoln Memorial rally, but a violent confrontation occurred after protesters marched from the Lincoln Memorial to the Pentagon.⁵⁷ Historian Paul Scheips describes the Pentagon scene as follows:

The first confrontation with the soldiers came about 1600 [4 p.m.], when some 200 demonstrators armed with “ax handles and carrying gas masks” breached a fence separating the North Parking area from the Jefferson Davis Highway and made for the River entrance. Marshals made arrests, but as the crowd grew in that area it moved toward the Mall entrance where upwards of a thousand threatened and then broke the rope barrier. In response, the authorities deployed a reserve company of the 503d Military Police Battalion

⁵⁰ Scheips, *The Role of Federal Military Forces in Domestic Disorders, 1945–1992*, p. 255.

⁵¹ Scheips, *The Role of Federal Military Forces in Domestic Disorders, 1945–1992*, p. 245, 250..

⁵² Scheips, *The Role of Federal Military Forces in Domestic Disorders, 1945–1992*, p. 251.

⁵³ Scheips, *The Role of Federal Military Forces in Domestic Disorders, 1945–1992*, p. 250.

⁵⁴ Scheips, *The Role of Federal Military Forces in Domestic Disorders, 1945–1992*, pp. 251, 264.

⁵⁵ In anticipation of the event, General Harold K. Johnson, the Army Chief of Staff “...instructed military intelligence personnel to join contingents of demonstrators and to travel with them by bus and train to Washington ‘to develop timely information on aims, movement, tactics and leadership of participating organizations and groups’... [undercover] Agents who maintained their cover were well received by the demonstrators, and sometimes played important roles among them. One, for example, served as the leader of a busload of demonstrators.” Scheips, *The Role of Federal Military Forces in Domestic Disorders, 1945–1992*, pp. 242-43. The Army Security Agency also monitored radio frequencies during the march, and “[i]n an unprecedented action on 20 October, General Yarborough, the assistant chief of staff for intelligence, sought and obtained National Security Agency support of the Army’s civil disturbance mission.” Scheips, *The Role of Federal Military Forces in Domestic Disorders, 1945–1992*, pp. 248.

⁵⁶ According to Paul Scheips, “Estimates of the crowd’s size were contradictory and impossible to reconcile. The [Military District Washington] headquarters put the number of persons at the Lincoln Memorial at 30,000 to 35,000, while the District of Columbia police estimated 20,000 to 22,000—although it may have been as large as 75,000. On the basis of counts made by two different intelligence agencies, the military district believed that approximately 33,000, ‘including a considerable number of sightseers,’ crossed the Memorial Bridge on their way to the Pentagon, while the Department of the Army put the number at 20,000.” Paul J. Scheips, *The Role of Federal Military Forces in Domestic Disorders, 1945–1992* (Washington, DC: United States Army Center of Military History, 2012) pp. 255, available at https://history.army.mil/html/books/030/30-20/cmh_pub_30-20.pdf. See also <https://web.archive.org/web/20051219220648/http://www.americanheritage.com/articles/web/20051021-pentagon-vietnam-protest-washington-dc-lyndon-johnson-jerry-rubin-david-dellinger-allen-ginsberg-yippie-robert-mcnamara.shtml>.

⁵⁷ Scheips, *The Role of Federal Military Forces in Domestic Disorders, 1945–1992*, p. 255, 258-262.

to that location. To restrain the shoving throng, marshals arrested those demonstrators who failed to fall back quickly....

Military police reinforcing the Mall entrance appeared briefly with rifles and bayonets fixed and sheathed. Since authority had never been given for the bayonets, [Army Chief of Staff] General Johnson ordered them removed. By 1700 [5:00 p.m.], the temper of the demonstrators around the entrance seemed to approach hysteria. Individuals surged against the troops, shouting curses, throwing bottles and rocks, and slashing with picket signs bearing antiwar messages. An aggressive element of the crowd attempted to go around the roadblock at the Washington Boulevard entrance to the Mall in an apparent effort to reach the Pentagon's heliport. That effort failed, but angry demonstrators at the Mall entrance nearly broke through the restraining line there. In response, commanders reinforced the troops both at the Mall and at the roadblock....

About that time, a thousand or so demonstrators swept around the northeast corner of the Mall parking lot and advanced on the River entrance, prompting the movement shortly after 1730 [5:30 p.m.] of a provisional battalion from Fort Myer to the Pentagon. In an explosion of violence, other demonstrators overran a platoon of military police located to the right of the Mall steps. Some of the soldiers were knocked to the ground. It was at this time that Attorney General Clark released the decision-making authority for using troops to General Johnson. But by then the assault on the Pentagon had reached its peak, with approximately 2,000 people breaking through the restraining line and charging toward a door to the left of the main Mall entrance. Only twenty or thirty pressed their way into the vestibule, and they were immediately and roughly pushed back to the bottom of the entrance stairway by troops inside the building....

As the afternoon waned, the turbulence caused commanders to urge stronger action. Whatever violence occurred, however, was the work of a minority. Task Force Inside [the main active duty element] would later report that "there were probably fewer than 500 violent demonstrators," although they "were backed by from 2,000 to 2,500 ardent sympathizers." Overall, from 85 to 90 percent of the crowd appeared to remain peaceful throughout the demonstration.

Published accounts of the day's activities contained a number of credible reports about military policemen and marshals who clubbed some demonstrators, and of soldiers who used their boots and rifle butts.⁵⁸

1968 – Martin Luther King Jr. Assassination Riots

At 4:00 p.m. on April 5, 1968, the day after the assassination of Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King, Jr., the D.C. mayor requested federal troops to assist civil authorities in their response to riots in the district. At 4:02 p.m., President Johnson issued a proclamation to "command all persons engaged in such acts of violence to cease and desist therefrom and to disperse and retire peaceably forthwith."⁵⁹ (*A proclamation to disperse* is required before a President may rely on Chapter 13 in Title 10 of the U.S. Code to quell a riot).⁶⁰ The statutory notice had been in effect for one minute when the President issued Executive Order (EO) 11403 at 4:03 pm to provide "for the restoration of law and order in the Washington Metropolitan Area."⁶¹ The EO authorized the

⁵⁸ Scheips, *The Role of Federal Military Forces in Domestic Disorders, 1945–1992*, p. 258-260. For additional information on Task Force Inside, see p. 246.

⁵⁹ White House, *Proclamation 3840*, F.R. Doc. 68-4256, April 5 1968, 33 F.R. 5495, p. 5495.

⁶⁰ 10 U.S.C. §254. Chapter 13 of Title 10 was formerly designated as Chapter 15. P.L. 114-328, §1241 renumbered Chapter 15 as Chapter 13.

⁶¹ White House, *Executive Order 11403*, F.R. Doc. 68-4257, April 5 1968, 33 F.R. 5501, p. 5501.

Secretary of Defense to federalize, and assume authority over, the National Guard for an indefinite period to carry out the EO's purposes. The order also gave the Secretary of Defense authority over the DCNG in its militia status, but 57 minutes later, this authority went unused as the Secretary exercised the Order's primary delegation to federalize the DCNG at 5:00 p.m.⁶² DCNG duties during the riots included providing security for the U.S. Capitol. The total number of troops deployed in D.C. soon after the issuance of EO 11403 was 13,466. This number included 11,618 from the active Army and 1,848 from the National Guard.⁶³ Total strength in the District peaked on April 10, 1968, at 15,530 troops.⁶⁴

⁶² Department of the Army, *After Action Report Task Force Washington*, July 30, 1968, p. 39 ("051700 - DCNG was Federalized.").

⁶³ Scheips, *The Role of Federal Military Forces in Domestic Disorders, 1945–1992*, p. 289.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

Figure 5. Soldiers Guarding Capitol during 1968 riots



Source: Leffler, W. K., photographer. (1968) *Soldiers stand guard near U.S. Capitol, during riots* / WKL. Washington D.C., 1968. April 8. [Photograph] Retrieved from the Library of Congress, at <https://www.loc.gov/item/2011648318/>.

1971 – May Day Protests

On May 1, 1971, thousands of protesters, led by a group called the Mayday Tribe, marched in Washington, D.C., against the Vietnam War. The march occurred after several weeks of antiwar demonstrations in Washington, D.C.⁶⁵ The Mayday Tribe set up a large, federally permitted, encampment near the Lincoln Memorial and organized protests in the city with the intent to block traffic and hinder federal employees trying to get to work.⁶⁶ The May Day

⁶⁵ Lawrence Roberts, "1971: Mayday," *Washington History*, vol. 32, no. 1/2 (Fall 2020), p. 33 at <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26947513>.

⁶⁶ Bart Barnes and J. Y. Smith, "Campers Ousted, Still Planning to Snarl City Today," *Washington Post*, May 3, 1971.

Tribe slogan was “if the government won’t stop the war, we’ll stop the government.”⁶⁷ According to one news account:

The official scenario, devised by the Mayday Tribe, a militant component of the Peoples Coalition for Peace and Justice, calls for groups ranging from 1,000 to 3,000 persons each to march to 21 selected locations in downtown Washington and suburban Virginia at about 7 a.m. Monday and Tuesday [May 3rd and 4th]. They hope to block all major commuter traffic for several hours and thus halt the functioning of government.⁶⁸

On June 30, Deputy Attorney General Richard Kleindienst announced that a force of 7,300 police and National Guard personnel were being readied to respond to the traffic disruptions planned by the protestors.⁶⁹ The force included approximately 5,000 D.C. Metropolitan Police, 1,400 National Guardsmen, 450 U.S. Park Police, and 450 United States Capitol Police.⁷⁰

Figure 6. Soldiers and Helicopter during May Day Protests



Soldiers sprint across the Washington Monument grounds to foil Vietnam War protesters mounting a blockade of the capital, May 1971. Courtesy Star Collection, DC Public Library, © Washington Post

Source: Marines Land at Washington Monument: Mayday 1971. Photo by A. J. Smith. Courtesy of the D.C. Public Library Washington Star Collection © Washington Post. May 3, 1971.

⁶⁷ Hannah Natanson, “Protests shut down D.C. traffic before. It helped end the Vietnam War – and reshaped American activism,” *Washington Post*, September 23, 2019, at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2019/09/23/protesters-shut-down-dc-traffic-before-it-helped-end-vietnam-war-and-reshaped-american-activism/>.

⁶⁸ Henry Aubin and Paul Valentine, “7,300 Police, Guardsmen Readied to Counter Disruptions Next Week,” *Washington Post*, May 1, 1971.

⁶⁹ Henry Aubin and Paul Valentine, “7,300 Police, Guardsmen Readied to Counter Disruptions Next Week,” *Washington Post*, May 1, 1971.

⁷⁰ Henry Aubin and Paul Valentine, “7,300 Police, Guardsmen Readied to Counter Disruptions Next Week,” *Washington Post*, May 1, 1971.

On May 2, the Department of Justice revoked the Mayday Tribe's license to use the parkland near the Lincoln Memorial and police went into the encampment at around 6:30 a.m. to clear out the protestors.⁷¹ The Washington Post reported that police cleared about 45,000 people from the park, although up to 10,000 regrouped in other parts of the city.⁷² At the same time, the federal government brought in about 10,000 more troops, including 2,000 Marines from Camp Lejeune, NC, and 4,000 paratroopers from the Army's 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, NC.⁷³ Throughout the day, "four-engine C-130 transport planes landed at Andrews [Air Force Base], unloaded battle-dressed paratroopers, and then took off again without halting their engines for return flights to North Carolina and more troops."⁷⁴ On Monday, May 3, demonstrators headed to key intersections, bridges, and traffic circles to form barricades with items such as wood, metal poles, and parked cars.⁷⁵ That day, "more than 7,000 persons were arrested in widespread hit-and-run skirmishes with police and federal troops ... [t]he arrests, made while police fired tear gas through much of downtown Washington and military helicopters whirled across city skies, were greater in number than any single event in the nation's history, research indicated."⁷⁶ On May 4, coalition leader Rennie Davis was arrested by the Federal Bureau of Investigation on conspiracy charges. The protests ended on May 6, and over 12,000 people were arrested.⁷⁷

2001 – Post-9/11 Homeland Defense Activities

In the days that followed the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the Pentagon in Virginia and the World Trade Center in New York, the DCNG mobilized personnel for security duty throughout Washington, D.C. The DCNG also established *Task Force Capital Guardian* with 100 National Guard personnel responsible for providing perimeter security at the U.S. Capitol Complex. Specific duties included securing the restricted area around Capitol Hill and checking vehicles entering that area.⁷⁸

⁷¹ Paul Valentine, "Justice Department Called Shot on Dispersing Antiwar Campers," *Washington Post*, May 3, 1971.

⁷² Bart Barnes and J. Y. Smith, "Campers Ousted, Still Planning to Snarl City Today," *Washington Post*, May 3, 1971. The Baltimore Sun reported that the total number of protestors evicted was 15,000. See "Police Oust 15,000 from Camp in DC," *Baltimore Sun*, May 3, 1971.

⁷³ "Police Oust 15,000 from Camp in DC," *The Sun*, May 3, 1971.

⁷⁴ "Police Oust 15,000 from Camp in DC," *The Sun*, May 3, 1971.

⁷⁵ Paul Valentine, "7,000 Arrested in Disruptions: New Obstructions Threatened Today," *Washington Post*, May 4, 1971.

⁷⁶ Paul Valentine, "7,000 Arrested in Disruptions: New Obstructions Threatened Today," *Washington Post*, May 4, 1971.

⁷⁷ Lawrence Roberts, "1971: Mayday," *Washington History*, vol. 32, no. 1/2 (Fall 2020), p. 34 at <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26947513>. A majority of the cases against those arrested were dropped, with only about 400 going to trial. See Lindsay Dillon, "If the Government Won't Stop the War, We'll Stop the Government": Mayday Protests of 1971," *Boundary Stones*, at <https://boundarystones.weta.org/2017/07/18/%E2%80%9Cif-government-won%E2%80%99t-stop-war-we%E2%80%99ll-stop-government%E2%80%9D-may-day-protests-1971>.

⁷⁸ D.C. National Guard website, at <https://dc.ng.mil/About-Us/Heritage/History/9-11-Response/>.

Author Information

Lawrence Kapp
Specialist in Military Personnel Policy

David A. Blum
Research Librarian

Alan Ott
Analyst in Defense and Intelligence Personnel
Policy

Hibbah Kaileh
Research Assistant

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