

Paul A. Allen  
October 11, 2025  
San Francisco, CA

(via email)

**San Francisco Police Commissioners:**

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Re: Public Safety and the National Guard

Dear Commissioners:

Today's uninformed, gratuitous, and terrifying statement<sup>1</sup> by Salesforce CEO Marc Benioff that the President should send the National Guard to San Francisco precisely illustrates why the Commission should have promptly acted upon my plea almost one month ago (attached), and three times subsequently at Public Comment hour, that this Commission go on record opposing the introduction of *uninvited* militarized police forces onto the streets of San Francisco. Now you are behind the curve.

In response to Benioff's entitled sentiment, apparently tossed off while sequestered in his private jet en route to SFO for his Dreamforce conference, District Attorney Brooke Jenkins thereafter appropriately responded that violators of local law will be held accountable, be they ordinary citizens or government or law enforcement officials.<sup>2</sup> (Indeed, the Chief should respond similarly - as should the Mayor.) This sort of declaration should be incorporated into your policy statement, particularly in light of the numerous circulating videos of apparently unprovoked attacks by Federal law enforcement officers on citizens who are merely exercising their Constitutional rights. In this connection, note that civil remedies for such Constitutional violations are largely

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<sup>1</sup> As originally reported in the New York Times, later picked up by *The Chronicle* and *The Standard*.

<sup>2</sup> "I am responsible for holding criminals accountable, and that includes holding government and law enforcement officials too, when they cross the bounds of the law..." as quoted in today's article in the San Francisco Chronicle. <https://www.sfchronicle.com/sf/article/marc-benioff-says-trump-send-national-guard-san-21095295.php>

unavailable, which is exactly why warnings such as those issued by District Attorney Jenkins are so essential.

Besides its statutory authority to set policy for SFPD and its goal, among others, to enhance public safety and the quality of life in San Francisco, this Commission has a moral responsibility to speak out when its goals and San Francisco's safety are threatened. To state the obvious: (1) an uninvited, militarized force is not needed, and (2) "crime reduction" is merely a pretext to impose Federal authority and to intimidate the City and its residents. Beyond this, the localized dangers from an uninvited militarized force are manifold: provoking a community response, the use of a force untrained in local law enforcement, the relative civil law immunity of these forces from the consequences of the suppression of Constitutionally protected activities, and the burden placed upon the existing and undermanned SFPD force to manage the second order effects. Other dangers are beyond the purview of the Commission but much more insidious and pernicious.

This Commission's members have forgotten more about public safety in San Francisco than Benioff will ever know, at least if one is to judge by his most recent comment. It is time for you to display your knowledge, expertise, and experience on this sensitive issue. You know far better than I that there were, and will likely always be, policy disagreements at the margin but not on the core principles and goals within your purview. Those principles and goals are at stake. There are right ways and wrong ways to enhance public safety. There was a time when San Francisco needed and requested law enforcement assistance; this is not one of those times.

Your published October schedule implies although it does not state that the Commission will be consumed this month with the essential task of preparing a roster of candidates for SFPD Chief. Nonetheless, I urge you to find time for the subject addressed here. Benioff's ill-informed, deplorable statement is nothing less than a lightning storm hitting California during fire season. Response urgently needed.

Sincerely,

Paul Allen

Attachment: September 14, 2025 Letter Re: Public Safety & The National Guard

Paul A. Allen  
September 14, 2025  
San Francisco, CA

(via email)

**San Francisco Police Commissioners:**

C. Don Clay, President [clarence.clay@sfgov.org](mailto:clarence.clay@sfgov.org)  
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Re: Public Safety and the National Guard

Dear Commissioners:

I respectfully request that the Police Commission immediately add to its agenda a motion that the Commission approve a public statement, now, opposing the introduction of a militarized force onto the streets of San Francisco absent the invitation of the Commission and other relevant City authorities. In order to expedite the consideration of same, I attach hereto a draft Statement for your consideration. The Statement speaks for itself; the reasons to proactively issue it are set forth immediately below.

As you are well aware, the Commission has an essential, legal role overseeing SFPD and its policies as well as the Department of Police Accountability. More to the point of this letter, according to the Commission's own Statement of Purpose the very first goal of the Commission is "*to enhance the quality of life and level of public safety in San Francisco.*" That goal would be seriously undermined upon the introduction of an uninvited, militarized force — such as the National Guard but perhaps including units of the Marine Corps as occurred in Los Angeles — onto the streets of San Francisco. As I note in the concluding paragraph of my draft Statement attached, there have been times when San Francisco *invited* forces from other jurisdictions, including the National Guard, onto our streets; this is not one of those times. One assumes that the Commission would oppose an uninvited militarized force; surely the public would.

Which leads to the question of timing. Setting aside public comment on the draft Statement and yours as well, the obvious question is: why issue this now? Wouldn't the issuance of such a Statement provoke the President? Isn't the wiser course to be silent, hoping that his anger and zeal for dominion will be directed elsewhere?

No. Los Angeles did not provoke the President yet it was targeted, only later issuing statements of opposition. The same happened in the District of Columbia. By contrast, Chicago was on notice for days if not weeks: the City, the State, and the public all made clear that they would vigorously oppose the introduction of uninvited militarized force there, so now apparently the President has turned his attention to Memphis. Memphis did not object in advance.

The right thing to do - both as a matter of principle and for practical reasons — is to go on record, now, that at least this Commission will not support the introduction of an uninvited, militarized force onto the streets of San Francisco. Obeying in advance only empowers the authoritarian. Perilous times demand courage.

Accordingly, I urge you to adopt this draft Statement or, in the alternative, to propose your own and to immediately include this matter on your agenda. I look forward to that discussion and to the public response.<sup>1</sup>

Sincerely,

Paul Allen

Attachment: Draft Statement of the San Francisco Police Commission Regarding Public Safety and Threats to Deploy the National Guard in the City of San Francisco, Dated September 13, 2025

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<sup>1</sup> I acknowledge former Commission Vice President Max Carter-Oberstone who reviewed an early version of this draft Statement and provided useful comments. I take full responsibility for the final version.

**Statement of the San Francisco Police Commission Regarding Public Safety  
and Threats to Deploy the National Guard in the City of San Francisco**

The San Francisco Police Commission unanimously opposes the introduction of an uninvited, militarized force onto the streets of San Francisco - whether in the form of the National Guard or otherwise - a shocking, unprecedented, and dangerous proposition that has been floated by the President of the United States. And, to do so under the guise of “crime reduction” would be particularly dishonest and pre-textual given the 50% reduction in crime in San Francisco since the President’s first term. The basis for our Statement is set forth below.

The San Francisco Police Commission (“the Commission”) is a seven-member volunteer agency whose members are appointed and approved by the Mayor and the Board of Supervisors through procedures set out in the City Charter. The Commission oversees the San Francisco Police Department (“SFPD”) by, among other things, enacting policies that guide the work of officers. The Commission works closely with SFPD, holds public meetings typically several times a month, and has a legal role in selecting (and removing) the Chief of Police. It also oversees the Department of Police Accountability.

In consequence, the Commission has a substantial role in promoting public safety - along with the Mayor, the Chief of Police, and relevant City, State, and Federal entities. Indeed, the Commission’s own Statement of Purpose has as its first goal: “*To enhance the quality of life and level of public safety in San Francisco.*” (emphasis added) Among its other goals relevant to this issue are: “to educate the public about matters of public safety and police oversight, and to solicit public feedback and criticism”; and “to enact policies that reflect evidence-based best practices.”

The Commission takes note that as of the date of this Statement the President of the United States has called out elements of the National Guard — and in the case of the City of Los Angeles, the United States Marine Corps — purportedly to assist in reducing crime in the City of Los Angeles and the District of Columbia, and that he has threatened to do so in other cities including New York, Chicago, Oakland, Baltimore, and San Francisco. And all this without the invitation of local authorities. Regarding Los Angeles, of course we are pleased that on September 2 Federal District Court Judge Breyer here in San Francisco ruled that defendants Trump, et.al. “violated the Posse Comitatus Act willfully” in Los Angeles. But the risk to our City remains, particularly because the President has apparently authorized the creation of a specialized National Guard force “to deal with public order issues.”

From these actions and statements, the obvious threat to San Francisco is the unwanted and uninvited militarization of local urban law enforcement, a pernicious and wholly unnecessary action given the plunge in our crime rate in the last few years:

- 2025 crime year-to-date in San Francisco is down almost 30%. (SFPD Crime Dashboard. <https://www.sanfranciscopolice.org/stay-safe/crime-data/crime-dashboard>)

- The “all crime” rate in San Francisco has been reduced by more than 50% in just the last two years and almost as much as that since early 2018 when the current President was in his first term. (<https://counciloncj.org/crime-trends-in-u-s-cities-mid-year-2025-update/#offense-dashboard>)

Given the foregoing, we oppose and would condemn the introduction of an uninvited, militarized force onto the streets of San Francisco. It is specious and absurd - nothing more than pretext and gaslighting - to suggest that such a force is needed to enhance public safety given the roughly 50% reduction in the City’s crime rate. We also know this because, when justifying the introduction of the military onto the streets of Los Angeles, the Secretary of Homeland Security opined that the purpose was to “liberate” the City from its own elected leadership.<sup>1</sup> That, and no doubt intimidation and the suppression of Constitutional rights.

In short, a force unauthorized by local officials would be a sinister, authoritarian assault on the City’s welfare, as well as democracy and federalism more generally; would itself risk provoking community backlash that might well *degrade* public safety; and would set back manifestly successful community-based public safety improvements.

History teaches that at this country’s inception, the very establishment of a standing Federal army, in contrast to the local militias, was highly controversial and vigorously opposed by many, including Patrick Henry who viewed such a force as a potential instrument of tyranny in the hands of a too-powerful future president. Madison responded to this concern, including in Federalist 46:

The only refuge left for those who prophesy the downfall of the State governments is the visionary supposition that the federal government may previously accumulate a military force for the projects of ambition.... Extravagant as the supposition is, let it however be made. Let a regular army, fully equal to the resources of the country, be formed; and let it be entirely at the devotion of the federal government; *still it would not be going too far to say, that the State governments, with the people on their side, would be able to repel the danger.*” Federalist No. 46 (Madison) (emphasis added.)

There have been times, even in the last few years, when San Francisco needed more help than it routinely receives from its State and Federal partners. When it did, it asked for help and gratefully received it. This is not one of those times.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/politics/noem-says-national-guard-occupation-is-meant-to-liberate-la-from-its-mayor-and-governor/ar-AA1GC4ui>