



national lawyers guild

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PRESS RELEASE

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THE NATIONAL LAWYERS GUILD, MASSACHUSETTS CHAPTER, CALLS ON THE GOVERNMENT TO CONDUCT AN INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION INTO 2013 CITY LOCKDOWN

Boston, October 27, 2014: On October 20, 2014, the National Lawyers Guild, Massachusetts Chapter (NLG) requested that Governor Deval Patrick and Attorney General Martha Coakley conduct an independent investigation into the unprecedented military-style lockdown of the City of Watertown on April 19, 2013 during the pursuit of the Boston Marathon bombing suspects.

Since the lockdown, the NLG has held a series of public meetings in Watertown and it has surveyed a number of Watertown residents. Our research showed the following facts: **(1) the lockdown was unprecedented.** Never before has a city been shut down in the search for a single suspect; **(2) the level of militarized police force used was unprecedented.** Police patrolled the streets of Watertown in armored vehicles and carried high-powered military rifles; **(3) the occupation of Watertown was ill-managed.** Officers from surrounding and distant municipalities simply came and participated without any clear chain of command; and **(4) the lockdown and subsequent city occupation were an utter failure.** For an entire day, heavily armed officers aimlessly searched throughout Watertown; yet, only after the lockdown ended did a civilian (not a police officer) find the unarmed, badly-injured suspect.

Benjamin Falkner of the NLG Litigation Committee observed that “the military-style occupation of Watertown marked a radical shift in domestic law-enforcement tactics. Rather than a targeted police operation, where police officers followed leads and searched where they had reason to believe that they would find the suspect, law enforcement turned to a blunt military invasion of a local municipality. Americans should not have to be afraid that their neighborhood will turn into a war zone every time a criminal evades the police.”

“The overwhelming show of force in pursuit of a single suspect in Watertown was shocking,” said Urszula Masny-Latos, Executive Director of the NLG. “For a whole day, what we saw on the streets of Watertown resembled war-time military operations rather than peace-time domestic police activity. This was unprecedented. Moreover, despite this unusually heavy deployment of troops, the lone suspect was not found, demonstrating the complete failure of the entire operation.”

The NLG has called for an independent and thorough investigation into the pursuit of the Boston Marathon bombing suspects so that the public may have satisfactory answers to questions still left unanswered and so that the public may be assured that they will not again face this kind of widespread and arbitrary use of military-style tactics by the police.

The National Lawyers Guild is the oldest and largest public interest and human rights bar organization in the United States. Its goal is to “serve the people to the ends that human rights shall be regarded as more sacred than property interests.”

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