

REMARKS BY

COLONEL RONALD M. SHARPE
COMMISSIONER
PENNSYLVANIA STATE POLICE

BEFORE

THE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE OF THE PENNSYLVANIA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY 16, 1990

I WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO APPEAR BEFORE YOU TODAY.

THE ROLE OF THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE POLICE IN ANY GIVEN EMERGENCY SITUATION CAN BE STATED QUITE SIMPLY, THE PRESERVATION OF PEACE AND THE PROTECTION OF LIFE AND PROPERTY.

THE DETAILS OF FULFILLING THAT MANDATE REQUIRES CONSIDERABLE COORDINATION, LOGISTICAL PLANNING AND COMMITMENT.

WHEN AN INCIDENT OF THIS NATURE OCCURS, AND TROOPERS THROUGHOUT THE COMMONWEALTH ARE CALLED TO ASSIST, THE LEVEL OF SERVICE TO THE CITIZENS THROUGHOUT THE STATE REMAINS CONSTANT AND IS NOT DIMINISHED BY OUR RESPONSE TO AN EMERGENCY SITUATION. AND WHILE I CAN'T SAY ENOUGH ABOUT THE DEDICATED MEN AND WOMEN OF THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE POLICE WHO WERE CALLED TO THE SITE OF THE CAMP HILL INCIDENT, I WOULD BE REMISS IF I DIDN'T COMMEND THOSE MEMBERS WHO REMAINED AT OUR MANY STATIONS WHERE WE ALREADY FEEL THE EFFECTS OF MANPOWER CONSTRAINTS, AND WORKED LONG HOURS PROVIDING CONTINUOUS, UNINTERRUPTED SERVICE TO THE CITIZENS OF PENNSYLVANIA.

ON THE AFTERNOON OF WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 25, 1989, PRISON OFFICIALS AT THE STATE CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION AT CAMP HILL REQUESTED STATE POLICE ASSISTANCE TO QUELL A DISTURBANCE. PERSONNEL FROM SURROUNDING TROOPS RESPONDED TO THE FACILITY. AT THE FACILITY, A CHAIN OF COMMAND WAS ESTABLISHED AND THE PERIMETER OF THE INSTITUTION WAS SECURED. OUR ROLE AT THIS POINT WAS THAT OF SUPPORT TO DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS PERSONNEL.

THE PRISONERS WERE SUBSEQUENTLY RETURNED TO THEIR CELLS, AND A CONTINGENT OF STATE POLICE REMAINED AT THE FACILITY TO ASSIST CORRECTIONS PERSONNEL. THE CONTINGENT WAS STATIONED OUTSIDE THE INSTITUTION, AND WERE SCHEDULED TO DEPART AT MIDNIGHT ON THE EVENING OF THURSDAY, OCTOBER 26TH.

PRIOR TO THEIR SCHEDULED DEPARTURE ON THE EVENING OF OCTOBER 26, PRISONERS ESCAPED FROM THEIR CELLS AND STARTED SETTING FIRES. THE ASSIGNED STATE POLICE CONTINGENT REINFORCED THE PERIMETER AND CALLED FOR ASSISTANCE.

APPROXIMATELY 800 OF THE STATE'S 4000 TROOPERS RESPONDED TO ASSIST IN QUELLING THE DISTURBANCE. COMMAND PERSONNEL INCLUDING THE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER, AREA I COMMANDER, AND COMMANDING OFFICER, TROOP H, HARRISBURG DIRECTED THE OPERATION AT THE SITE AND ARE PRESENT TODAY TO RESPOND TO ANY INQUIRIES REGARDING SPECIFIC TACTICAL OPERATIONS AT THE CAMP HILL FACILITY.

I ESTABLISHED AN OFF-SITE COMMAND POST AT OUR DEPARTMENT HEADQUARTERS TO DIRECT LOGISTICAL AND SUPPORT OPERATIONS. LINES OF COMMUNICATION WERE ESTABLISHED WITH ON-SCENE COMMANDERS.

IN ADDITION TO PERSONNEL, HELICOPTERS, CANINE UNITS, MOUNTED UNITS, AND SPECIAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAMS WERE COMMITTED TO THE OPERATION.

I EXTEND MY APPRECIATION TO OTHER STATE AND LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES AND EMERGENCY SUPPORT UNITS WHO ASSISTED IN THIS OPERATION.

I WILL NOW RESPOND TO ANY QUESTIONS YOU MAY WISH TO ASK.