



June 10, 2019

The Honorable William P. Barr  
Attorney General  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20530

The Honorable Jeffrey A. Rosen  
Deputy Attorney General  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Attorney General Barr and Deputy Attorney General Rosen:

On behalf of the International Association of Chiefs of Police, I am writing to express our strong concern over the U.S. Department of Justice's (USDOJ) directive to state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies that task force officers cannot activate their body-worn cameras while performing federal task force activities.

Local law enforcement agencies have always valued our federal partnerships. Joint task forces and partnerships have been critical to investigating complex criminal activity and keeping our communities safe. Recently, these partnerships have become strained over a conflict between federal rules and community expectations for police officer use of body-worn cameras.

In recent years, community expectations have evolved to require greater transparency and accountability from police departments, and one of the many tools to aid police departments in achieving transparency and enhancing community trust has been the use of body-worn cameras.

Law enforcement agencies use body-worn cameras in a variety of ways: to improve evidence collection, to strengthen officer performance and accountability, to enhance agency transparency, to document encounters between police and the public, and to investigate and resolve complaints and officer-involved incidents.

The USDOJ has had a history of supporting and recommending the use of body-worn cameras by state, local, and tribal law enforcement as a leading practice. From grant programs that support the use and purchase of body-worn cameras by state, local, and tribal agencies, to the creation of resources such as toolkits, recommendations, and lessons learned guidance to aid agencies in the implementation of body-worn cameras.

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**Deputy Executive Director /  
Chief Operating Officer**  
Terrence M. Cunningham  
*Alexandria, VA*

As a result of USDOJ guidance, resources, and grant programs and community sentiment, many law enforcement agencies have instituted mandatory wear policies. When implementing these policies, they have used USDOJ's resources for guidance.

But now, in contradiction to the federal government's guidance and communicated value of body-worn cameras, local agencies are being told that their officers cannot activate their body-worn cameras while performing federal task force activities.

Unfortunately, these restrictive federal rules regarding the use of body-worn cameras by state and local law enforcement officers are having a negative impact. The conflict between federal rules and community expectations forces local agencies to choose between community accountability or participation in task force investigations. As a result, we are beginning to see some agencies, like the Atlanta, Georgia, Police Department, pull their officers from federal task forces.

State and local law enforcement serve a valuable role on federal task forces. These task force officers not only act as force multipliers, but federal agents are able to leverage their intimate knowledge of the community to achieve success in reducing crime and safeguarding our communities. The strength of a federal task force lies in the participation by all, and without this cohesive teamwork the important operations performed by task force officers may be jeopardized.

This is not the first time the IACP has raised concern over this issue. The IACP previously discussed it with former U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions and former U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen. On behalf of the more than 31,000 members of the IACP, we urge you to make this issue a priority and encourage you to revisit the federal rules pertaining to the use of body-worn cameras by police officers participating in federal task forces.

On behalf of the IACP, thank you for your attention to this important matter. The IACP stands ready to assist you as we continue to work together on issues important to the policing profession and our communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul M. Cell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "P" and "C".

Paul M. Cell  
President, IACP