

General Steven Nordhaus
Chief of the National Guard Bureau
Sent via email, 8/15/2025

Dear General Nordhaus:

We, the undersigned organizations, work to protect press freedom in the United States. We have written to you in the past to offer our assistance in the context of the National Guard's deployment to Los Angeles in June. We are taking this opportunity to once again extend this same offer, as forces under your command are being deployed to Washington, DC.

As we noted in June, we recognize that National Guard troops may not receive specialized training on recognizing and protecting the rights of journalists. We have unfortunately witnessed dozens of recent violent acts committed by law enforcement officers against journalists doing their Constitutionally-protected work covering protests in Los Angeles. We all have a common interest in ensuring the Constitution is upheld at all times, including during this current deployment.

You will no doubt recognize that the presence of National Guardsmen and women to assist with policing crime in our nation's capital is a matter of significant public interest. We can therefore anticipate that members of the news media will be present to observe and report on their public movements and actions, as is their legal right and their professional obligation. It is imperative that the men and women under your command are aware of this and make every effort to avoid impeding them.

The situation in Washington, DC is of course very different from the one the National Guard encountered in Los Angeles. There are no ongoing large-scale protests at the time of writing. We are thus hopeful that deployed guardsmen and women will encounter no violence and not be required to use any force. I will refer you the detailed legal review of press rights in [our previous letter](#), and emphasize that:

- Members of the media are legally permitted to be present and document law enforcement procedures in public spaces.
- While many journalists wear accreditation or insignia to make their status clear, they are not legally required to do so—there is no official national press card.
- Journalists should not be detained, even briefly, while doing their jobs. Any detention of a journalist has a chilling effect on the First Amendment.

As we wrote in June, journalists and Guard troops have a common purpose: to serve the public in upholding our democracy. We are once again asking that you do everything in your power to ensure that the men and women under your command are aware of the legal protections afforded to the press and take great care to protect the First Amendment during their deployment to Washington, DC. We continue to stand ready to discuss this matter further and to assist you in any way to guarantee freedom of the press.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Reporters Without Borders (RSF)
Freedom of the Press Foundation
Radio Television Digital News Association
National Association of Black Journalists
Washington Association of Black Journalists
Society of Environmental Journalists
National Press Photographers Association
International Women's Media Foundation
Society of Professional Journalists
Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)
Protect Democracy
Association of Foreign Press Correspondents in the USA
National Press Club