

To: Joint Committee on Transparent Policing and Use of Force Reform  
From: Brendan Deiz  
RE: Use of tear gas

Co Chair Bynum, Co-Chair Manning, and members of the committee,

My name is Brendan Deiz, I was born and raised in Portland, Oregon and am a current Portland resident.

Late June 25th/early June 26th, 2020, while I was in bed recovering from a recent surgery, I heard 10 loud explosions in the middle of the night. I thought, "It's a bit early for 4th of July." Because I had been dealing with a mild fever post-surgery, I'd been running the air conditioning unit in my window at night to try and help keep my temperature down. A few minutes after I heard the explosions, which turned out to be flash grenades, not fireworks, smoke started pouring through the AC unit and choking me and burning my eyes. I recognized the smell as tear gas. I immediately shut the unit off. I then ran through the house, with one hand still in a bandage, shutting all the rest of the windows, so it wouldn't fill up the house.

Since then, I have tried airing out my room, scrubbing the filters on the unit and wiping it down. None of that was enough, because when my fever came back on Monday, July 6th, and I ran the unit again for a while, and started to notice my throat hurting and my eyes burning again.

As of this moment, no matter how much I scrub, fan, or filter, the smell is still so intense in my room that I can't be in there for more than 10 minutes without my eyes watering, my throat hurting, and becoming dizzy and nauseous. I have been forced to sleep on the couch downstairs at night, and am waiting on my renter's insurance to help me get the room professionally cleaned.

This has been especially stressful and traumatizing for me, as I was particularly vulnerable while recovering from major reconstructive surgery, and now I don't even feel safe, or healthy, in my own bedroom. I've been fighting waves of dizziness and nausea all week, as a result of the gas. I am worried that I may be developing health problems from this long-term exposure. Every time I hear fireworks, (now that it's still close to the 4th of July, they're going off regularly) I wonder if it's flash bangs and if I need to desperately get all the windows shut, before I get gassed again. Every night, I hear police helicopters, ominously overhead (a sound that was never common in Portland until recently) and can barely sleep more than a few hours, constantly worried I will again be attacked in my own room.

How is this ongoing use of gas, terrorizing civilians in their own homes, supposed to be "protecting" the people of Portland? I have never been gassed by a protestor, a "looter," a "rioter", nor anyone who toppled a statue. The police have been ordered multiple times, by multiple officials, to stop using this dangerous nerve toxin, yet they continue to do so, against unarmed, mostly peaceful protestors. How is filling up the city with dangerous chemicals a reasonable response to a statue being toppled? The city is now covered in CS nerve gas. It will be seeping into our groundwater and coming down in the rain soon. It will continue to harm animals, people who live outside, and anyone whose neighborhood was unlucky enough to be filled with these chemical weapons, as well as anyone walking, shopping, or working downtown. CS gas use is illegal as a weapon of war, under the Geneva Conventions, meaning our soldiers in Iraq could have been charged with war crimes for using it. How can the city justify using its police force like an occupying military against the residents of Portland?

Thank you for your time.  
--Brendan Deiz