

Thousands of National Guard Troops Return to Capitol After Forced Removal; Lawmakers Demand Answers

Two weeks prior to Wednesday's inauguration of President Joe Biden, thousands of National Guard troops deployed to Washington, D.C., to protect the Capitol after the deadly breach of Jan. 6. But after reports of their mistreatment spurred outrage among lawmakers and other government officials, rapid changes took place.

On Thursday, troops were forced to vacate the Capitol for breaks during their 12-hour shifts and move outdoors or into nearby parking garages, Politico reported. Photos of Guard members sleeping together on the ground quickly went viral along with comments decrying the change. "I've never in my entire career felt like I've been booted onto the curb and told, 'figure it out on your own,'" tweeted one guardsman.

Hundreds of Guardsmen are laying on the concrete of a Capitol garage. Few if any bathrooms can be found. One soldier was nearly hit by a car.

"I've never in my entire career felt like I've been booted onto the curb and told, 'figure it out on your own.'"

– Alex Horton (@AlexHortonTX) January 22, 2021

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott responded in outrage before ordering those troops to return to their home state.

This is the most offensive thing I've ever heard.

No one should ever question the loyalty or professionalism of

the Texas National Guard. @TexasGuard

I authorized more than 1,000 to go to DC.

I'll never do it again if they are disrespected like ://

– Greg Abbott (@GregAbbott_TX) January 19, 2021

“As Congress is in session and increased foot traffic and business is being conducted, Capitol Police asked the troops to move their rest area,” National Guard spokesperson Maj. Matt Murphy told Politico. “They were temporarily relocated to the Thurgood Marshall Judicial Center garage with heat and restroom facilities. We remain an agile and flexible force to provide for the safety and security of the Capitol and its surrounding areas.”

Lawmakers’ shock and outrage stretched across party lines. Tammy Duckworth, D-Ill., joined the many lawmakers expressing outrage over the treatment of the servicemen, calling the mistreatment “unreal” and adding, “They can use my office.”

Unreal. I can't believe that the same brave servicemembers we've been asking to protect our Capitol and our Constitution these last two weeks would be unceremoniously ordered to vacate the building. I am demanding answers ASAP. They can use my office.

– Tammy Duckworth (@SenDuckworth) January 22, 2021

And Sen. Madison Cawthorn, R-N.C., tweeted that he had not only visited the soldiers who had been “abandoned and insulted” but brought them pizza as well.

I just visited the solders who have been abandoned & insulted by our leaders. I brought them pizza and told them that they can sleep in my office.

No soldier will ever, ever sleep on a garage floor in the US

Capitol while I work in Congress

Our Troops deserve better.

– Madison Cawthorn (@CawthornforNC) January 22, 2021

Howard Altman, editor of *The Military Times*, reported that Thursday night, troops were being allowed back into the Capitol:

Update: “Because of the MASSIVE backlash over this, we are now being allowed back into the senate building,” one soldier told Military Times. “We’re going to make a big show of marching back into the building.”

– Howard Altman (@haltman) January 22, 2021

Early Friday, Kris Van Cleave of CBS News confirmed that National Guard troops are out of the garage and will now take their breaks in Emancipation Hall.

The National Guard confirms to @CBSNews the troops are out of the garage and back into the Capitol building and the troops will take their breaks near Emancipation Hall going forward. Video from the Guard:

– Kris Van Cleave (@krisvancleave) January 22, 2021

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