

## **COLONEL W. STEVEN FLAHERTY STATEMENT ON THE “INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF THE 2017 PROTEST EVENTS IN CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA”**

RICHMOND, Va. –The state police appreciates the time and effort put forth by Mr. Tim Heaphy and his team to produce such a detailed report on the unprecedented events that occurred in the City of Charlottesville on Aug. 12, 2017. Thorough reviews and evaluations of public safety planning, response and management of significant incidents are invaluable in helping a law enforcement agency assess what *has* happened and successfully prepare for the future. In addition to the completion of our own internal after-action report, we also await the results of the final report by the Governor’s Task Force on Public Safety Preparedness and Response to Civil Unrest.

As with any review of a public safety response to a major incident, context and experience in proper policing practices are critical to the utilization of reports of this nature. On Aug. 12, individuals from 35 different states came to the City of Charlottesville cloaked under the protection of our nation’s First Amendment. These very individuals, from both the extreme right and extreme left, attended the Unite the Right Rally with the sole purpose of provoking violence from the opposing side. In that kind of volatile and rapidly-evolving environment, it is difficult for any one police plan to account for every possible circumstance and resulting scenario. For that reason, police plans must be adaptive in nature so as to empower the on-scene police agency(s) with the flexibility needed for immediate decision-making and sufficient deployment of resources.

What happened in Charlottesville on Aug. 12, 2017 was unprecedented in Virginia’s history. Aug. 12, 2017 also required the largest deployment of Virginia State Police personnel and resources to a single event in our 85-year history. That decision to assign more than 600 sworn and civilian personnel to this event did not happen overnight. State police, in partnership with local and state public safety agencies and Charlottesville government, spent weeks planning and preparing for a multitude of worst-case scenarios that had the potential to occur because of the unparalleled intelligence gathering and analysis shared among all relevant agencies. The state police deployments in Charlottesville on July 8 and Aug. 12 were in support of the Charlottesville Police Department in fulfillment of our agency mission: “The Virginia State Police, independent yet supportive of other law enforcement and criminal justice agencies, is to provide high quality, statewide law enforcement services to the people of Virginia and its visitors; and to actively plan, train and promote emergency preparedness in order to protect the citizens of the Commonwealth and its infrastructure.”