From: j.pasdigselv
To: Grp. City Council and City Web Site
Subject: Rogers International
Date: Tuesday, April 12, 2022 7:11:30 PM

Hello Council --

While I feel I made strong points in my public comment, I did promise I'd discuss Security Theater and what's called Foucault's Boomerang, and since I wasn't able to squeeze those topics in I figured I'd write a follow up. I also want to add a few more observations about the kit and equipment I've seen in use by RI employees which did not lend themselves well to nervous comments in under 3 minutes. I will address the equipment first since it's easy and requires little explanation.

I have been trained to know that if you carry a firearm, you are morally obligated to carry emergency medical equipment. A **minimal** individual first aid kit would include a twin pack of vented chest-seals, a CoTCCC approved tourniquet, sterile wound-packing gauze, a space blanket, and an emergency trauma dressing, all of which can fit into a small pouch that is usually carried on the belt. In the camps I also carry naloxone. I would expect that RI does have a trauma kit at the stations, but it is standard practice for openly armed individuals to carry medical equipment on their person should an emergency occur, but I see very few RI employees carrying any medical equipment whatsoever. And as mentioned at the meeting, when using holsters with a documented record of carving trenches down thighs, it would be wise to at least have a tourniquet, if only for their own safety.

The other gear specifics are more subtle, but worth paying attention to should you try to observe these phenomena before RI attempts to revamp their public image. These include using holsters which seemingly do not have second-level retention, are worn on flimsy cloth belts, loose thigh straps on leg shrouds, and so on. Several members of the council have taken ride-alongs with MPD. While not an admirable institution for its treatment of the poor and homeless in Missoula, MPD does a decent job of presenting themselves with kit and equipment fitted properly. It would be interesting to compare the two.

I would also be curious as to the particular variety of plates used by RI employees. The armor I showed the council is ceramic, it is designed to crack on impact, dispersing the momentum of the bullet across the plate without shattering or creating new projectiles. Given the nature of their kit, it would not shock me if the RI employees who do have plates in their carriers are using AR500 armor, which is steel. I cannot confirm they are using those plates, but if the council should look into the matter you should understand that steel plates are also inappropriate personal protection devices. When shot the bullet splatters on the face of the plate, and creates spall, which then can travel up the face of the plate and impact the wearer's neck and face. If you are a fan of Gallagher, you will be delighted by the videos of watermelons getting shredded by steel armor spall, plentiful on youtube, and often shown in tactical training courses.

I'm sure Dave Pritchard could cobble together the argument that the plate carriers, empty or not, are primarily for carrying chest cameras, tasers, and the like, but I think the council should be aware that there are other more comfortable, and cheaper harness and chest rig solutions, and that not all of his employees have been wearing those cameras anyway. When worn in a manner which does not fulfill the purpose of the armor as a personal protection device, we are left to conclude that the equipment is **not** understood to be a tool, but rather it is used to intimidate observers and communicate the wearer's capacity for violence. If the argument cannot be made that tactical equipment and firearms are necessary for personal defense, then the conclusion must be that they are instead props.

This is a good time to introduce to the concept of security theater. Put bluntly, security theater is the performance of rituals which we believe to increase our safety, but which empirically have little to no effect. An example would be the TSA forcing you to empty your water bottle before you pass through security to get on a plane. This is essentially the function of RI at the camps and shelters around town. The job of protecting the residents and staff of the camps and shelters, as well as acting as an intermediary between the housed and unhoused residents of Missoula, has never required the presence of openly carried firearms, body armor, nor knives. In much of the reporting around this issue it has been claimed that RI is "building relationships" with the residents, and while I'm sure that's true, I invite you to consider how equal and equitable a relationship can be when one party involved has the authority and means to use lethal violence.

I want to underscore a point I made in my first comment: this city is filled with generous, intelligent, hard-working people who already have established professional relationships with the residents and staff of the shelters and camps, and could easily fulfill the roles currently being filled by Rogers International, and do it all without playing dress-up in nonsensical kit. But for whatever reason, many of the programs and jobs which could be expanded to meet this need remain under-staffed, under-funded, and under-appreciated by the city. We cannot keep throwing young social workers into the meat-grinder that is this particular sector of public service, pay them pennies, and expect them to be physically, economically, and emotionally capable of maintaining this vital care-work out of their own sense of charity. We have been parasitizing off their moral decency for far too long.

And again, I resent the fact that we are using ARPA funds to pay for this private security performance, when the entire argument was that they would relieve the burden on MPD. If MPD works less, they should be paid less. I know it's not politically fashionable to take moral stands against the police, but from a value-neutral perspective it is just economically inefficient.

And I think that leads me to the final topic I want to make in this already too damn long of an email. I think the council should learn about a concept called Foucault's Boomerang. Put simply, it is the observation that tactics used in occupations of foreign countries during war have a nasty habit of coming home. Those on the council who remember the early half of the Iraq war may remember the use of "private military companies" (mercenaries) in particularly dangerous regions of the war. You might remember a particular group called Blackwater, infamous for the massacre of 17 innocent Iraqis in 2007. I am not so dramatic as to draw a direct comparison between the monsters of Blackwater to the seemingly normal employees of RI, but I do believe the city hiring a private police force is a dangerous precedent. The US government handed over military authority to PMC's in Iraq to lessen the casualties they would have to report of actual enlisted soldiers, and a nice after-effect was that this also provided them apparent plausible deniability for the actions taken by employees of PMC's. I do not think it is melodramatic to assume that should RI use force against my unhoused neighbors, I doubt the city would be quick to take accountability. I don't think this was the intent of hiring RI, but intentions do not matter, only consequences. Each day the council tacitly endorses RI's armed patrols in our community, the day draws closer when we will see an incident. The residents of the shelters and camps often have deeply traumatic histories with men wearing body armor and guns. It should not be surprising if one day, in a crisis and not lucid, a resident becomes hostile to the guards. There is a difference between being hostile and being a threat, but given the state of their kit I do not feel particularly confident in RI employees' threat analysis. Is it worth a human life to let these guys play soldier in our streets? Am I actually safer in the camps now? I certainly don't feel safer.

If you've made it this far, I appreciate your patience. I hope you'll talk to your colleagues. The future of this community looks rough for many of us. We are being crushed by low wages, high rent, inaccessible medical care, a government which will steal our money but won't meet our needs, and cascading environmental disasters. The security we require is knowing our needs will

be met. That our friends and neighbors are getting enough to eat and a warm place to sleep, that we can expect dignity and respect from each other, and that we won't be threatened while simply going about our day. I promise future emails won't be so freaking verbose, but there's a lot to say between now and budgeting season.

I'll see you all at the next meeting.

Joe