



OFFICE OF CHAIRMAN MENDELSON
COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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**STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN PHIL MENDELSON ON U.S. ATTORNEY'S
DECISION NOT TO PROSECUTE
POLICE SHOOTING OF TERRANCE STERLING**

Washington, D.C. -- It is difficult to second guess a prosecutor's decision to not prosecute a shooting case because of insufficient evidence. And the circumstances surrounding last fall's shooting of Terrence Sterling are not crystal clear as to provocation or over-reaction. But there are good reasons for continuing concern in light of last September's police shooting. First public trust in the police is paramount and precious. Police cannot protect a community if they are distrusted or feared. This is why government must discourage use of force by its police, and why, when it does occur, it should be carefully examined. Even if the use of force was not criminal, it is deleterious, because it jeopardizes the trust we need to have in our police.

I understand that there is now a disciplinary (non-criminal) investigation into the incident. A decision not to prosecute is not always an exoneration. If the officer who shot and killed Terrence Sterling did not follow the protocols in place to protect the citizens, then the appropriate discipline should be imposed. This was not an incident of ordinary mistakes: it involved use of force and the taking of someone's life, and it implicates the fundamental public trust the police need maintained. I urge a thorough and unbiased review.