

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF LOUISIANA

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Plaintiff,

vs.

CITY OF NEW ORLEANS,

Defendant.

12-1924
SECT. E MAG. 2

CONSENT DECREE REGARDING
THE NEW ORLEANS POLICE DEPARTMENT

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The City of New Orleans (“City”), including the New Orleans Police Department (“NOPD” or “Department”), and the United States of America (collectively, “the Parties”) enter into this agreement (“Agreement”) with the goal of ensuring that police services are delivered to the people of New Orleans in a manner that complies with the Constitution and laws of the United States. The Parties have a shared recognition that the ability of a police department to protect the community it serves is only as strong as the relationship it has with that community. Public safety, constitutional policing, and the community’s trust in its police force are thus interdependent. The full and sustained implementation of this Agreement is intended to protect the constitutional rights of all members of the community, improve the safety and security of the people of New Orleans, and increase public confidence in the New Orleans Police Department.

To achieve these goals, NOPD agrees to fundamentally change the way it polices throughout the New Orleans Community. This Agreement thus requires the City and the Department to implement new policies, training, and practices throughout the Department, including in the areas of: use of force; stops, searches, seizures, and arrests; photographic lineups; custodial interrogations; discriminatory policing; community engagement; recruitment; training; performance evaluations; promotions; officer assistance and support; supervision; secondary employment; and misconduct-complaint intake, investigation, and adjudication.

Noting the general principle that settlements are to be encouraged, particularly settlements between government entities, and having considered the terms of the measures set forth herein, and that the Defendant agrees to resolve the United States’ claims without resort to adversarial litigation, it is ORDERED, ADJUDGED, AND DECREED that Judgment shall be entered in this matter pursuant to the following terms and conditions:

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background

In May 2010, the United States Department of Justice (“DOJ”) formally notified the City that it was initiating an investigation of the New Orleans Police Department for an alleged pattern or practice of unlawful misconduct, pursuant to the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, 42 U.S.C. § 14141 (“Section 14141”); the anti-discrimination provisions of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968, 42 U.S.C. § 3789d

(“Safe Streets Act”); and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, 42 U.S.C. § 2000d (“Title VI”).

As part of its investigation, DOJ, in conjunction with its police-practices consultants, conducted a detailed fact-finding review, including numerous tours of NOPD facilities; interviews with New Orleans officials, NOPD command staff, supervisors, and police officers; review of more than 36,000 pages of documents; and meetings with residents, community groups, and other stakeholders within the City. In addition, DOJ participated in detailed exit interviews between its police-practices consultants and NOPD officials following each investigatory tour.

DOJ issued a written report of its findings (“Report”) on March 16, 2011. The Report documents DOJ’s finding of a number of patterns or practices of unconstitutional conduct and details DOJ’s concerns about a number of NOPD policies and practices.

DOJ’s investigation was conducted with the full cooperation of the City and NOPD. This Agreement is the product of a cooperative effort built on the Parties’ mutual commitment to constitutional policing. The Parties acknowledge the many NOPD officers who perform their difficult jobs diligently and with integrity.

B. General Provisions

1. This Agreement is effectuated pursuant to the authority granted to DOJ under Section 14141, the Safe Streets Act, and Title VI to seek declaratory or equitable relief to remedy a pattern or practice of conduct by law enforcement officers that deprives individuals of rights, privileges, or immunities secured by the Constitution or federal law.

2. Nothing in this Agreement is intended to undermine the lawful authority of NOPD police officers to use reasonable and necessary force, effect arrests, conduct searches or make seizures, or otherwise fulfill their law enforcement obligations to the people of New Orleans in a manner consistent with the requirements of the Constitutions and laws of the United States and the State of Louisiana.

3. Nothing in this Agreement, the United States’ Complaint, or the negotiation process shall be construed as an admission or evidence of liability under any federal, state, or municipal law including, but not limited to, 42 U.S.C. § 1983. Nor is the City’s entry into this Agreement an admission by the City, NOPD, or any officer or employee of either entity, that they have engaged in any unconstitutional, illegal, or otherwise improper activities or conduct.

4. This Court has jurisdiction over this action under 28 U.S.C. §§ 1331 and 1345. The United States is authorized to initiate this action pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 14141 and 42 U.S.C. § 3789d. Venue is proper in the Eastern District of Louisiana pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391, because the Defendant is located in and the claims arose in the Eastern District of Louisiana.

5. The Parties enter into this Agreement jointly for the purpose of avoiding the burdens of litigation and to support vigorous and constitutional law enforcement. Moreover, joint entry of this Agreement is in the public interest since it provides for the expeditious implementation of corrective measures, promotes the use of the best available policing practices and procedures, and avoids the diversion of federal and City resources to adversarial actions by the Parties.

6. This Agreement resolves all claims in the United States' Complaint filed in this case. This Agreement also constitutes a full and complete settlement of any and all civil claims the United States may have as of the Effective Date against the City and its officers, employees, or agents, regarding any alleged pattern or practice of conduct by New Orleans police officers in carrying out their law enforcement responsibilities.

7. This Agreement shall constitute the entire integrated agreement of the Parties. No prior drafts or prior or contemporaneous communications, oral or written, shall be relevant or admissible for purposes of determining the meaning of any provisions herein in any litigation or any other proceeding.

8. This Agreement is binding upon all Parties hereto, by and through their officials, agents, employees, and successors. If the City establishes or reorganizes a government agency or entity whose function includes overseeing, regulating, accrediting, investigating, or otherwise reviewing the operations of NOPD or any aspect thereof, the City agrees to ensure these functions and entities are consistent with the terms of this Agreement and shall incorporate the terms of this Agreement into the oversight, regulatory, accreditation, investigation, or review functions of the government agency or entity as necessary to ensure consistency.

9. This Agreement is enforceable only by the Parties. No person or entity is intended to be a third-party beneficiary of the provisions of this Agreement for purposes of any civil, criminal, or administrative action. Accordingly, no person or entity may assert any claim or right as a beneficiary or protected class under this Agreement.

10. In the event of any public-records request, requesting drafts of this Agreement or communications among the Parties leading to this Agreement, the Court will maintain continuing

jurisdiction over any such request. Further, the Parties may assert in any action, motion, subpoena, or request for disclosure of information the ongoing applicability of a settlement privilege to all such drafts or communications among the Parties leading to this Agreement.

11. This Agreement is not intended to limit or expand the right of any person or organization to seek relief against the City, NOPD, or any officer or employee thereof, for their conduct or the conduct of NOPD officers; accordingly, it does not alter legal standards governing any such claims by third parties, including those arising from city, state, or federal law. This Agreement does not expand, nor will it be construed to expand, access to any City, NOPD, or DOJ documents, except as expressly provided by this Agreement, by persons or entities other than DOJ, the Defendant, and the Monitor.

12. The City is responsible for providing necessary support and resources to NOPD to enable NOPD to fulfill its obligations under this Agreement.

13. The Defendant, by and through its officials, agents, employees, and successors, is enjoined from engaging in conduct that deprives persons of rights, privileges, or immunities secured or protected by the laws of the United States.

C. Definitions/Abbreviations

14. The following terms and definitions shall apply to this Agreement:

- a) "Active resistance" means a subject attempts to attack or does attack an officer; exhibits aggressive behavior (e.g., lunging toward the officer, striking the officer with hands, fists, kicks or any instrument that may be perceived as a weapon such as knife or stick); or exhibits defensive resistance (e.g., attempts to leave the scene, flee, hide from detection, or pull away from the officer's grasp). Verbal statements, bracing, or tensing alone do not constitute active resistance.
- b) "Apprehension" means the arrest, capture, or taking into custody of a person.
- c) "Arrest" is the taking of one person into custody by another. To constitute arrest there must be an actual restraint of the person. The restraint may be imposed by force or may result from the submission of the person arrested to the custody of the one arresting him. An arrest is a restraint of greater scope or duration than an investigatory stop or detention. An arrest is lawful when supported by probable cause.
- d) "AVL" means "Automatic Vehicle Locator," a device that automatically tracks the geographic position of a vehicle and transmits that information to a receiver.

- e) "Bilingual staff" means a staff person who has demonstrated and verified proficiency, pursuant to generally accepted objective criteria, in both spoken English and at least one other language as authorized by NOPD.
- f) "Bite ratio" means the number of canine apprehensions that result in a bite, divided by the number of canine apprehensions. Accidental and/or unintentional bites shall be included in the numerator.
- g) "Body cavity search" means any visual or physical inspection of a person's genital or anal region with or without any physical contact with or intrusion into a body cavity.
- h) "Canine apprehension" means any time a canine is deployed and plays a clear and well-documented role in the capture of a person. The mere presence of a canine at the scene of an arrest shall not count as a canine apprehension.
- i) "Canine deployment" means any situation, except one involving an on-leash article search only, in which a canine is brought to the scene and used in an attempt to locate or apprehend a suspect, whether or not a suspect actually is located or apprehended.
- j) "CCMS" means Criminal Case Management System.
- k) "Civilian Employee" means any non-sworn personnel employed by NOPD, on either a temporary or permanent basis, in either a paid or unpaid capacity.
- l) "City" means the City of New Orleans, including its agents, officers, and employees.
- m) "CIT" means Crisis Intervention Team.
- n) "Clearance" means an arrest leading to prosecution for an offense is made or an offense is cleared by exception. Offenses cleared by exception must be supported by all of the following factors: 1) the identity of the offender is known; 2) probable cause exists to support arrest and prosecution of the offender; and 3) the exact location of the offender is known, but something prevents the immediate arrest, such as the death of the offender, including suicide, or the offender is currently in custody at a correctional facility in another jurisdiction.
- o) "Complainant" means any person, including an NOPD officer or employee, who makes a complaint against NOPD or an officer or employee of NOPD.
- p) "Complaint" means any complaint regarding NOPD services, policy or procedure, any claim for damages, or any criminal matter that alleges possible misconduct by an NOPD officer or employee. For purposes of this Agreement, the term "complaint" does not include

any allegation of employment discrimination.

q) "Court" means the United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Louisiana presiding over this case.

r) "Critical firearm discharge" means a discharge of a firearm by an NOPD officer, including discharges where no person or animal is struck. Range and training firings, destruction of animals, and off-duty hunting discharges where no person is struck are not critical firearms discharges.

s) "Custodial Interrogation" means words or actions on the part of an officer that the officer knows or should know are reasonably likely to elicit an incriminating response, after a person has been taken into custody.

t) "DA" means the Orleans Parish District Attorney's Office.

u) "Demographic Category" means age, race, color, ethnicity, national origin, religion, gender, disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

v) "Discipline" means a personnel action for violation of an established law, regulation, rule, or NOPD policy, including an admonishment, written reprimand, suspension, demotion, or dismissal.

w) "Discriminatory Policing" means selective enforcement or non-enforcement of the law, including the selecting or rejecting of particular policing tactics or strategies based on membership in a demographic category specified in this Agreement. Discriminatory policing does not include using race, ethnicity, or any other status in any reliable and recent suspect-specific description.

x) "District" means one of the eight police service areas of NOPD located throughout New Orleans that is led through the chain of command by a District Commander.

y) "DOJ" means the United States Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division and its agents and employees.

z) "DVU" means Domestic Violence Unit.

aa) "ECW" means Electronic Control Weapon, a weapon designed primarily to discharge electrical charges into a subject that will cause involuntary muscle contractions and overrides the subject's voluntary motor responses.

bb) "ECW application" means the contact and delivery of electrical impulse to a subject with an Electronic Control Weapon.

- cc) "Effective Date" means the day this Agreement is entered by the Court.
- dd) "EWS" means Early Warning System.
- ee) "FBI" means the Federal Bureau of Investigation.
- ff) "Firearm" means a pistol, revolver, shotgun, carbine, or machine gun, as well as any instrument capable of discharging a bullet or shot.
- gg) "FIT" means Force Investigation Team, the NOPD unit tasked with conducting investigations of serious uses of force; uses of force indicating apparent criminal conduct by an officer; uses of force by NOPD personnel of a rank higher than sergeant; and uses of force reassigned to FIT by the Superintendent, the Superintendent's designee, or PIB. FIT shall also investigate all instances where an individual has died while in, or as an apparent result of being in, the custody of NOPD.
- hh) "Force Statement" means a written statement documenting a use of force as required by this Agreement.
- ii) "FTO" means Field Training Officer.
- jj) "IACP" means International Association of Chiefs of Police.
- kk) "ICO" means Integrity Control Officer.
- ll) "Implement" or "implementation" means the development or putting into place of a policy or procedure, including the appropriate training of all relevant personnel, and the consistent and verified performance of that policy or procedure in actual practice.
- mm) "Including" means "including, but not limited to."
- nn) "Interpretation" means the act of listening to a communication in one language (source language) and orally converting it into another language (target language), while retaining the same meaning.
- oo) "Interview" means questioning for the purpose of eliciting facts or information.
- pp) "Investigatory stop" or "investigatory detention" means a temporary restraint where the subject of the stop or detention reasonably believes that s/he is not free to leave. An investigatory stop or detention may be a pedestrian, vehicle, or bicycle stop.
- qq) "IPM" means the Independent Police Monitor.
- rr) "Less-lethal force" means force employed that is neither likely nor intended to cause death or serious injury.
- ss) "Less-lethal weapon" means any apprehension or restraint tool that, when used as

designed and intended, is less likely to cause death or serious injury than a conventional lethal weapon (e.g., firearm).

tt) "Lethal force" means any use of force likely to cause death or serious physical injury, (e.g., the use of a firearm, neck hold, or strike to the head, neck, or throat with a hard object).

uu) "LEP" means Limited English Proficient, and refers to a person who does not speak English as his/her primary language and has a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English. LEP individuals may be competent in certain types of communication (e.g., speaking or understanding), but still be LEP for other purposes (e.g., reading or writing).

vv) "LGBT" means Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender.

ww) "Major Special Events" include Mardi Gras; Jazz Fest; Essence Music Festival; French Quarter Festival; Voodoo Fest; college bowl and college championship events; professional sporting events; and other events as designated by the Mayor, Chief Administrative Officer, the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety, the City Attorney, City Council, or the Superintendent of Police as a "Major Special Event."

xx) "MCTU" means Mobile Crisis Transportation Unit.

yy) "Monitor" means a person or team of people who shall be selected to monitor and report on implementation of this Agreement.

zz) "Neck hold" means one of the following types of holds: (1) arm-bar control hold, a hold that inhibits breathing by compression of the airway in the neck; (2) carotid restraint hold, a hold that inhibits blood flow by compression of the blood vessels in the neck; (3) a lateral vascular neck constraint; or (4) a hold with a knee or other object to the back of a prone subject's neck. A neck hold shall be considered lethal force.

aaa) "NOFJC" means the New Orleans Family Justice Center.

bbb) "Non-disciplinary corrective action" means action other than discipline taken by an NOPD supervisor to enable or encourage an officer to improve his or her performance.

ccc) "NOPD" means the New Orleans Police Department and its agents, officers, supervisors, and employees (both sworn and unsworn).

ddd) "NOPD unit" means any designated organization of officers within NOPD, including districts and specialized units.

eee) "NOPDAI" means NOPD Authorized Interpreter, a bilingual NOPD employee, who has

been authorized to interpret for others in certain situations, such as interviews, interrogations, or taking and responding to citizen complaints.

fff) "NOPDAI List" means a list of NOPD personnel who are bilingual and are authorized to act as volunteer interpreters.

ggg) "Passive Resistance" means behavior that is unresponsive to police verbal communication or direction (e.g., ignoring or disregarding police attempts at verbal communication or control; going limp; or failing to physically respond or move) and verbal resistance (e.g., verbally rejecting police verbal communication or direction; telling the officer that he or she will not comply with police direction, to leave alone, or not bother him or her). Bracing, tensing, linking arms, or verbally signaling an intention to avoid or prevent being taken into custody constitutes passive resistance.

hhh) "PCAB" means Police-Community Advisory Board.

iii) "Personnel" means NOPD officers and employees.

jjj) "PIB" means the Public Integrity Bureau, the NOPD unit charged with conducting internal and administrative investigations of NOPD officers and employees.

kkk) "Police officer" or "officer" means any law enforcement agent employed by NOPD, including supervisors and cadets.

lll) "Policies and Procedures" means written regulations or directives, regardless of the name of the regulation or directive, describing the duties, functions, and obligations of NOPD officers and/or employees, and providing specific direction in how to fulfill those duties, functions, or obligations.

mmm) "POST" means the Louisiana Police Officer Standards and Training Council.

nnn) "Probable cause" means that the facts and circumstances known to the officer at the time would justify a prudent person in believing that the suspect committed or was committing an offense.

ooo) "Reasonable Force" means force that is objectively reasonable under the circumstances and the minimum amount of force necessary to effect an arrest or protect the officer or other person.

ppp) "Reasonable suspicion" means articulable facts that, within the totality of the circumstances, lead an officer to reasonably suspect that criminal activity has been or is about to be committed.

qqq) "RSE" means Recurring Secondary Employment.

rrr) "SART" means Sexual Assault Response Team.

sss) "Seizure" or "detention" occurs when an officer's words or actions would convey to a reasonable person that he or she is not free to leave.

ttt) "Serious physical injury" means physical injury that creates a substantial risk of death; causes death or serious and protracted disfigurement; or causes impairment of the function of any bodily organ or limb.

uuu) "Serious use of force" means: (1) all uses of lethal force by an NOPD officer; (2) all critical firearm discharges by an NOPD officer; (3) all uses of force by an NOPD officer resulting in serious physical injury or requiring hospitalization; (4) all neck holds; (5) all uses of force by an NOPD officer resulting in a loss of consciousness; (7) all canine bites; (8) more than two applications of an ECW on an individual during a single interaction, regardless of the mode or duration of the application, and whether the applications are by the same or different officers, or ECW application for longer than 15 seconds, whether continuous or consecutive; and (9) any strike, blow, kick, ECW application, or similar use of force against a handcuffed subject.

vvv) "Service firearm" means any firearm issued to sworn personnel by the Department.

www) "Shall" or "Agrees to" means that the provision imposes a mandatory duty.

xxx) "Specialized unit" means a temporary or permanent organization of officers within NOPD, whose operational objectives are focused on a specific law enforcement purpose beyond general patrol or criminal investigations, and that require enhanced training on police tactics, strategies, or techniques.

yyy) "Strip search" means any search of an individual requiring the removal or rearrangement of some or all clothing to permit visual inspection of the suspect's groin/genital area, buttocks, female breasts, or undergarments covering these areas.

zzz) "Superintendent" means the Superintendent of NOPD.

aaaa) "Supervisor" means a sworn NOPD employee at the rank of sergeant or above (or anyone acting in those capacities) and non-sworn NOPD personnel with oversight responsibility for other officers.

bbbb) "Translation" means the replacement of written text from one language (source language) with an equivalent written text in another language (target language).