



Public Hearing Comments of Jonathan S. Aronie,
Lead Monitor, NOPD Consent Decree
Before Judge Susie Morgan,
U.S. District Court For The Eastern District of Louisiana

June 13, 2017

On June 13, 2017, Judge Susie Morgan, U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana, held a special hearing in *U.S. v. City of New Orleans* (2:12-cv-01924-SM-JCW) to examine the jurisdiction and responsibility of the New Orleans Police Department. The hearing included statements from the NOPD, the City of New Orleans, the Consent Decree Monitoring Team, the U.S. Department of Justice, and police chiefs of several federal and local police agencies operating in New Orleans. Following are the comments of Mr. Aronie, the lead monitor of the Consent Decree Monitoring Team.

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Thank you Your Honor. My team and I have been monitoring the New Orleans Police Department since August 2013. Over the course of that time, we have seen significant improvements in the Department's policies, procedures, and practices in almost every area of the Consent Decree. I'm pleased to report, as I mentioned at the last hearing, the New Orleans civilian community has taken note of NOPD's efforts and of the results of those efforts. While the community – like NOPD itself – recognizes more work needs to be done, our research shows that the community increasingly views the NOPD as trustworthy, professional, and respectful. In fact, later this month we will be publishing the results of our recent biennial community survey, which provides greater details regarding this positive development.

We also, of course, regularly speak to community members regarding areas of ongoing concern. One issue that consistently comes up in these discussions is the role of non-NOPD police agencies operating in New Orleans that are not subject to the Consent Decree. Another area is whether NOPD's Force Investigation Team is authorized to investigate officer uses of force involving those other agencies.

As an initial matter, I find it quite notable that the community *wants* NOPD to investigate officer uses of force regardless of the police agency involved. This is not something we would have heard from the community four years ago, prior to the execution of the Consent Decree. But we now hear it frequently, and NOPD rightly should be proud that its FIT unit has come so far in just a few years.

While I think the community understands that FIT cannot handle every police use of force by every agency – Federal agencies and the Louisiana State Police, for example, may have exclusive jurisdiction in some types of cases – the community wants to know that NOPD's FIT



unit is handling all the investigations that fall within its jurisdiction. The community wants this comfort for three primary reasons:

- First, NOPD's FIT unit has specialized training and has developed specialized skills to handle the unique issues involving investigating police use of force cases.
- Second, NOPD's Public Integrity Bureau – the parent organization of FIT – has some measure of independence from the daily operations of the NOPD. The Bureau is run by a civilian and is not involved in field operations.
- Third, is accountability. NOPD FIT's work is reviewed and evaluated by the Superintendent of Police, the Independent Police Monitor, the District Attorney's Office, and my Monitoring Team (and, thus, this Court). There are a lot of eyes on FIT's work, which understandably gives the community greater comfort in the integrity of that work.

The Monitoring Team shares these community views and, thus, was pleased to see NOPD recently enter into Memoranda of Understanding with a number of local police agencies to outline roles and responsibilities, and to clarify how police uses of force would be investigated. NOPD should be commended for reaching out to and embracing the help of other agencies in this fashion. As major cities across the country struggle with increasing violent crime rates, NOPD's cooperation and coordination with its neighboring agencies is logical, wise, and essential.

We also are quite pleased with the recently-approved NOPD Policy 1.1, which outlines the authority NOPD and NOPD FIT play in officer uses of force by NOPD and non-NOPD officers.

Finally, the Monitoring Team is pleased the Court elected to hold this hearing. The importance of sensible, compliant, and clear guidelines regarding inter-agency cooperation cannot be overstated. Without clearly understood roles and responsibilities, officers and civilians are put at risk.

Thank you Your Honor. And, of course, I'll be happy to answer additional questions as the hearing proceeds.

Jonathan S. Aronie
Consent Decree Monitor
Sheppard Mullin Richter & Hampton, LLP
Washington, DC 20006