



U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Intergovernmental Affairs

Office of the Director

Washington, D.C. 20530

October 16, 1997

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Attorney General

FROM: Eric D. Rosen, Assistant Director
Office of Intergovernmental Affairs

SUBJECT: Boston Police Department's Response to
Citizen Complaints

Per your request, we have followed up with representatives of the Boston Police Department to discuss their procedures for handling citizen complaints against officers. You asked us to examine the complaint statistics for three police departments: Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. Where New York and Philadelphia have experienced slight rises in their complaint statistics, Boston's appear to be on the decline.

The Boston Police Department's Internal Investigations Bureau pointed to a variety of policies and procedures they currently have in place that may be contributing to the Department's dropping complaint statistics. Many of the practices cited to were implemented under the leadership of Commissioner Paul Evans and are new to the Department. While the Internal Investigations Bureau was reluctant to point to any one reason for Boston's encouraging statistics, they did highlight three particular practices that may be contributing to dropping complaint numbers:

- ▶ Recruit Investigations -- Boston's new recruits are now investigated by investigators supervised directly by the Department's Internal Affairs Division. As a result, problem cases are discovered earlier and weeded out before they become officers. Boston has seen an increased number of rejected applicants as a result, but Internal Investigations staff points to this preventative measure as contributing to lower citizen complaint figures down the road. In addition, Commissioner Evans has dramatically lowered the number of recruits per police academy class. Where over 100 candidates used to make up a class, the

throughout the year, representatives of the Department meet with concerned citizens and constituent groups to discuss their findings and to explore ways in which they can lower complaint statistics in the future.

Over 90% of the Boston Police Department's officers received no citizen complaints in 1996. This figure exists despite the fact that over the last three years the Department has hired over 600 new officers. While it is difficult to determine which of the above-described policies has affected the complaint statistics, it is clear that Boston is aggressively attempting to maintain harmonious relations between its officers and the community, and that where other cities' police forces are accumulating additional complaints Boston appears to be keeping its figures in check.

cc: The Deputy Attorney General
The Acting Associate Attorney General
Laurie Robinson, AAG/OJP
Isabelle Katz Pinzler, AAAG/CRT

number now hovers around 40. This results in more academy classes, but Internal Investigations staff noted these smaller classes makes intervention with potential problem candidates easier.

- ▶ Early Intervention System -- If Internal Affairs discovers three or more complaints against an officer within a two-year period, a review is automatically triggered. Introduced in 1993, this program examines repeated complaints against not only officers, but against supervisors, districts, policies, and academy classes as well. For example, if Internal Affairs discovers that a certain district is generating a higher number of complaints than others, they investigate that district's procedures. Since the program's introduction, Internal Affairs has seen an 85% drop in the number of officers with three or more complaints within a two-year period.
- ▶ Increased Level of Supervision -- Since 1994, Commissioner Evans has increased by 30% the number of sergeants, lieutenants, and captains on the force. There has also been a corresponding increase in amount of training available to officers; this training informs officers of their rights if a complaint is lodged against them as well as their responsibility to report instances of fellow officer misconduct.

Representatives of the Boston Police Department noted other procedures they have in place that may be contributing to their complaint statistics. As a preventative measure, supervisors are given examples of common causes of complaints and instructed to be mindful of such instances should they arise. In August of 1995, and for the first time in the Boston Police Department, a Public Integrity Policy was spelled out which enunciated an officer's affirmative obligation to report fellow officer misconduct. Also in the last few years, the Department has changed its use of force policy. A new type of pepper spray has been provided to officers, along with more intensive training so that officers feel more comfortable using the spray. The result has been that, in appropriate circumstances, officers have been more likely to use pepper spray (as compared with a stick) than before. In addition, training has become more specialized, with all new detectives now receiving four weeks of instruction in investigative techniques.

The Bureau of Internal Affairs has been restructured since 1992. Where complaints against officers used to be handled at the district level, they now are routed directly to Internal Affairs. Internal Affairs has doubled its number of investigators over the last several years; the Bureau's investigators are career-track, they work in teams, and their tenure in the Bureau is voluntary. Also, within the last several years, the Police Department has begun to communicate their Internal Affairs statistics to the community. Periodically



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