



Public Hearing Opening Statement of Jonathan S. Aronie, Consent
Decree Monitor Over The New Orleans Police Department
Before The U.S. District Court For The Eastern District of Louisiana
Focusing on the NOPD Police Academy
17 December 2019

Your Honor, as you mentioned, back in January the Monitoring Team reported that most sections of the Consent Decree had moved into Full and Effective Compliance. Four areas, including the Academy, were “nearing Full and Effective Compliance,” and a handful of areas were still in the “Significant Progress” category. While today’s hearing is focused on the Academy, and, as you will hear, we are recommending Section 12 of the Consent Decree move into Full and Effective Compliance, before we start, I would like to say a few words about the progress NOPD has made and continues to make in other areas.

We often report at these hearings that NOPD has made remarkable progress “but still has a long way to go.” I’m happy to report, while work remains to be done, NOPD does not have a long way to go to achieve Full and Effective Compliance with the Consent Decree. In fact, if the Department continues on its current pace, several additional areas will be moved into Full and Effective Compliance in the near future, including PIB, Community Policing, and Recruitment.

The accomplishments in these areas over the past few months have allowed the NOPD, the DOJ, and the Monitoring Team to focus our efforts on the three most significant areas requiring our attention: Stops/ Searches/ Arrests, Bias Free Policing, and Supervision. The Department, the DOJ, and the Monitoring Team continue to dedicate significant attention to these areas.

With regard to Supervision, for example, several months ago the Department assigned a team of Deputy Chiefs and Captains to develop an aggressive action plan to bring the Department into compliance with Section 15 of the Consent Decree. I’ve sat in on almost all of the group’s meetings and have reviewed the draft recommendations. I am confident they will bring the Department into compliance with Section 15 if they are implemented in a meaningful way. But until I see that implementation, I’m not in a position to recommend moving Supervision into full and effective compliance.

SSA and Bias Free are in a slightly different category. In both areas, the Department has made important structural improvements in its policies, processes, and practices. But as I

explained back in January, it's not easy to test the effectiveness of those improvements. NOPD, DOJ, and the Monitoring Team have been meeting weekly over the past few months to develop the tools necessary to evaluate NOPD's compliance in this area. We expect those tools to be finalized this month, and a series of final deep-dive audits to be conducted early next year.

In addition to focusing on the few areas of the Consent Decree not yet in Full and Effective Compliance, the Monitor Team also has been working to ensure no back-sliding by the Department in other areas. To this end, we continue regularly reviewing Body Worn Camera videos, analyzing use of force data, riding along with officers and supervisors, attending roll calls, and working hand-in-hand with the Professional Standards & Accountability Bureau on a number of important projects. For example, we currently are taking a very close look at the operations of the NOPD District-based Task Forces, especially in the area of Supervision, to ensure there is absolutely no backsliding in that area. We also continue to take a hard look at every officer-involved shooting, of which there sadly have been several this past year, to ensure no backsliding there either.

Also, as you know, we continue to measure the perception of the New Orleans community to the NOPD. We recently published the results of our most current Community Survey. The report, which is available on the Court's and the Monitor's web sites, demonstrates NOPD's efforts are paying off. Citizen respect for and trust in the NOPD continue to improve, as does the perception of the Department of the officers themselves. This was our third city-wide survey, and the continued upward trend in almost every metric gives me great optimism as the Department moves closer to the sustainment period.

While the Department clearly is closing in on the finish line, history tells us that many law enforcement agencies across the country have made similar reforms only to walk back from them the moment they were no longer under the microscope. But that is why our Consent Decree builds in a two year Sustainment Period. Once the Department comes into Full and Effective Compliance with the totality of the Consent Decree, we then enter into a two-year period where the Department must prove its reforms will last. This two-year period is a critical time for NOPD. This really is where the rubber meets the road as they say.

In conclusion, your honor, as I always do, I would like to give my team's thanks to the high level of cooperation we continue to receive from NOPD's leadership team and the Department's rank and file. I also want to thank the Department of Justice. Every member of the DOJ team has been a consistent and proactive participant in all the reforms to date. We would not be where we are now if it were not for their expertise and cooperation. And finally, at the risk of sounding like I'm pandering, I need to thank you. As the parties to this case will readily admit, you likely are the most intimately involved federal judge over any Consent Decree in this country. Your hearings and monthly meetings and status conferences and phone calls have helped ensure none of us ever takes our eyes off the goal here, which is transforming the NOPD into a best-in-class law enforcement agency, and one that is in full and effective compliance with the Consent Decree. Thank you for that.