

## Police Reform Complete?

Seattle, federal officials agree to federal changes

By Chris Grygiel  
The Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — Seattle officials have agreed to an independent monitor and court oversight of the city's police department as part of a deal with the U.S. Justice Department following a report that found officers routinely used excessive force.

City and federal negotiators were involved in tense talks over the scope of a deal for months, and Justice Department lawyers had threatened to sue the city if a deal was not reached by July 31.

"It's no secret there were a few bumps in the road to get here," Mayor Mike McGinn said of the agreement, which was announced Friday. "We do have a lot of work in front of us."

The Justice Department launched its civil rights investigation early last year after the fatal shooting of a homeless, Native American woodcarver and other incidents involving force used against minority suspects. In December, a DOJ report found officers were too quick to reach for weapons, such as flashlights and batons, even when arresting people for minor offenses.

The agreement was announced at City Hall by McGinn; Jenny Durkan, U.S. attorney for Seattle, and Thomas Perez, the Justice Department's chief civil rights enforcer.

The deal also calls for a special commission, appointed by the mayor, to concentrate on use of force issues.

have to change policies and training concerning "bias-free" policing and stops, and create a Community Police Commission, which would be a civilian oversight body.

Court oversight would continue for five years, but the city could ask to end the scrutiny earlier if it has complied with the agreements

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The settlement, which must be approved by a federal judge, requires the Seattle Police Department to revise use of force policies and enhance training, reporting, investigation and supervision for situations involving use force. Police also would

for two years.

"This city is committed to eliminating bias," McGinn said.

Perez said the agreement could serve as a way to help reduce crime and increase public confidence in the city's police officers.

"We must continue to be well aware of the very raw feelings that many Seattle residents continue to have toward the Seattle Police Department," Perez said.

Surveillance cameras and

police-cruiser videos had captured officers beating civilians, including stomping on a prone Latino man who was mistakenly thought to be a robbery suspect, and an officer kicking a non-resisting black youth in a convenience store.

The earlier Justice Department report found that force was used unconstitutionally one out of every five times an officer resorted to it. The department failed to adequately review the use of force and lacked policies and training related to the use of force, it said.

The American Civil Liberties Union and other community groups called for scrutiny of the department after a Seattle officer shot and killed the woodcarver, John T. Williams, in 2010.

Video from Officer Ian Birk's patrol car showed Williams crossing the street holding a piece of wood and a small knife, and Birk exiting the vehicle to pursue him. Off-camera, Birk quickly shouted three times for Williams to drop the knife then fired five shots. The knife was found folded at the scene, but Birk later maintained Williams had threatened him. Birk



resigned from the force and was not charged. A review board found the shooting unjustified.

Doug Honig, spokesman for the American Civil Liberties Union of Washington state, was also pleased.

"The city and the DOJ appear to have taken our concerns about excessive force, racially biased policing and flaws in the oversight system seriously," Honig said. "The implementation is what's going to matter."

Since the beginning of 2010, the Justice Department's civil rights division has previously reached settlements to reform police practices in New Orleans and in Warren, Ohio.

It has sued the Maricopa County, Arizona, sheriff's office and the East Haven, Connecticut, police department for a pattern and practice of discrimination against Latinos and Hispanics.

Associated Press writers Gene Johnson in Seattle and Michael J. Sniffen in Washington, D.C., contributed to this report.

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