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Department of Justice

Office of Public Affairs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, July 8, 2020

Justice Department Announces Findings of Investigation into Narcotics Bureau of Springfield, Massachusetts Police Department

Following a comprehensive investigation, the Justice Department announced today that it has found reasonable cause to believe the Narcotics Bureau of the Springfield, Massachusetts, Police Department (SPD) engages in a pattern or practice of using excessive force in violation of the Fourth Amendment to the United States Constitution. The investigation was conducted pursuant to the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 and was announced on April 13, 2018.

The Department of Justice found that the Narcotics Bureau's pattern or practice of excessive force is directly attributable to systemic deficiencies in policies, which fail to require detailed and consistent use-of-force reporting, and accountability systems that do not provide meaningful reviews of uses of force.

"I've said many times that being a police officer is the toughest job in America. We owe these public servants our respect and our support," said Attorney General William P. Barr. "But with this high calling comes a tremendous responsibility to uphold the public trust. The Department of Justice is committed to supporting our law enforcement while holding departments accountable that violate this sacred trust. The department will work with the City of Springfield and the Police Department to ensure that the police officers and people of Springfield get the law enforcement agency they deserve, one that effectively and constitutionally stops violent crime and narcotics trafficking."

"The Fourth Amendment to the United States Constitution protects all people in our nation from excessive force by law enforcement," said Assistant Attorney General Eric Dreiband of the U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division. "The Department of Justice looks forward to working with the City of Springfield and its Police Department to protect this very important Constitutional right."

"As demonstrated by recent events, it is crucial that our urban police departments keep the trust of their communities and ensure accountability for officer misconduct," said U.S. Attorney for Massachusetts Andrew Lelling. "Our investigation of the Springfield Police Department over the last year revealed chronic issues with the use of force, poor record keeping on that subject, and repeated failures to impose discipline for officer misconduct. That said, the department and the City of Springfield have fully cooperated with this investigation and have made clear their commitment to genuine reform. We look forward to working with them to make Springfield a safer place."

In the course of its investigation, the Justice Department conducted an in-depth review of SPD documents, including over 100,000 pages of written policies and procedures, training materials, and internal reports, data, video footage, and investigative files. Justice Department attorneys and investigators also conducted interviews with SPD officers, supervisors and command staff, and city officials, and met with community members and local advocates. SPD has cooperated with the department's investigation and has already begun to implement a number of remedial measures.

This investigation was conducted jointly by the Special Litigation Section of the Civil Rights Division and the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Massachusetts, with the assistance of law enforcement experts.

Attached are the Department of Justice's Report of its Investigation of the Narcotics Bureau of the Springfield, Massachusetts Police Department, and a cover letter to Springfield government officials transmitting that Report.

The Civil Rights Unit of the U.S. Attorney's Office was established in 2015 with the mission of enhancing federal civil rights enforcement. For more information on the Office's civil rights efforts, please visit www.justice.gov/usao-ma/civil-rights.

Attachment(s):[Download Investigative Report](#)[Download Cover Letter](#)**Component(s):**[Civil Rights Division](#)[Office of the Attorney General](#)[USAO - Massachusetts](#)**Press Release Number:**

20-634

Updated July 8, 2020