

Justice Department and U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of New Jersey Announce Investigation of the City of Trenton and the Trenton Police Department

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Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke for the Civil Rights Division and U.S. Attorney Philip R. Sellinger for the District of New Jersey announced today that the Justice Department has opened a civil pattern or practice investigation into the City of Trenton, New Jersey, and the Trenton Police Department (TPD).

The investigation will seek to determine whether there are systemic violations of the Constitution and federal law by TPD. The investigation will focus on TPD's use of force and its stops, searches and arrests. The investigation will include a comprehensive review of TPD policies, training and supervision, in addition to complaint intake, internal investigation protocols, complaint reviews, complaint adjudications and disciplinary decisions.

"The public must have trust and confidence that police officers will treat them fairly and with respect," said Assistant Attorney General Clarke. "The Justice Department is opening an investigation into the Trenton Police Department after an extensive review of publicly available information and other information provided to us suggesting that officers used force, stopped motorists and pedestrians and conducted searches of homes and cars in violation of the Constitution and federal law. Our experience has shown that policing practices that run afoul of the law and our Constitution can lead to distrust between police officers and the community. The Justice Department will conduct a full and fair investigation into these allegations, and if we substantiate those violations, the department will take appropriate action to remedy them."

"Police officers have the difficult job of keeping us safe, and most officers do this work with honor and distinction," said U.S. Attorney Sellinger. "But if police officers abuse the trust the community places in them and fail to respect the constitutional rights of those in the community, and if the community feels threatened by those who wear the badge, it undermines public safety and endangers the very citizens they swore to protect and serve. Unfortunately, we have reviewed numerous reports that Trenton police officers may have used force inappropriately and conducted stops, searches, and arrests with no good reason in violation of individuals' constitutional rights. Today's announcement reflects our office's commitment to ensuring effective, constitutional policing in Trenton and throughout New Jersey. Trenton residents should be assured that we will

conduct a thorough and impartial investigation of the Trenton Police Department, and that we will address any unlawful conduct we find.”

Before this announcement, officials from the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division and the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of New Jersey notified Trenton Mayor Reed Gusciora, Director Steve Wilson of TPD and Director Wes Bridges of the Trenton Law Department, who have all pledged to cooperate with the investigation. As part of this investigation, the Justice Department will conduct outreach to community groups and members of the public to learn about their experiences with TPD.

The Special Litigation Section of the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division and the U.S Attorney’s Office Civil Rights Division will jointly conduct this investigation pursuant to the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, which prohibits state and local governments through their law enforcement officers from engaging in a pattern or practice of conduct by law enforcement officers that deprives people of rights protected by the Constitution and federal law. If the Justice Department has reasonable cause to believe that the law enforcement officers of a state or local government have engaged in a prohibited pattern or practice, the department is authorized to bring a lawsuit seeking court-ordered changes to remedy the violations. In this investigation, the department will assess the law enforcement practices under the Fourth and Fourteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution.

Individuals with relevant information are encouraged to contact the Justice Department via email at USANJ.Community.Trenton@usdoj.gov or by phone at 973-645-2801. Individuals can also report civil rights violations regarding this or other matters using the reporting portal of the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division, available at www.civilrights.justice.gov or the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of New Jersey’s civil rights reporting portal, available at www.justice.gov/usao-nj/civil-rights-enforcement/complaint.

Additional information about the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division is available on its website at www.justice.gov/crt. Additional information about civil rights enforcement at the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of New Jersey is available at www.justice.gov/usao-nj/civil-rights-enforcement.

The Justice Department will hold a virtual community meeting on October 23 at 6:00 p.m. ET. Members of the public are encouraged to attend to learn more about the investigation. [Please join the meeting via this link.](#)

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