



CIVILIAN OFFICE OF POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY

INTEGRITY • TRANSPARENCY • INDEPENDENCE • TIMELINESS

December 27, 2024

TO: Michael Barz
18th District Commander
Chicago Police Department

FROM: Steffany Hreno
Director of Investigations
Civilian Office of Police Accountability

RE: Concerns Related to 18th District Tactical Team Activities

Dear Commander Barz:

The Civilian Office of Police Accountability (COPA) is writing to inform you of a high number of complaints we have received regarding one of the 18th District tactical teams. Over the past year, COPA has received over 50 complaints related to traffic stops, street stops, searches, and unprofessional conduct by members of the 1863 tactical team.¹ The vast majority of these complaints were initiated by civilians, as opposed to CPD supervisors or COPA, and approximately 25 of these cases remain under investigation by COPA.

COPA has reviewed and analyzed the Body Worn Camera (BWC) footage, Investigatory Stop Reports (ISRs), and other evidence pertaining to 22 of these open complaints, all of which involved traffic stops or street stops conducted by the 1863 tactical team.² In reviewing these complaints, COPA has noticed several problematic patterns that you should be aware of. First, over 90% of the complaints that COPA examined involved the stop of Black individuals, despite the fact that Black residents comprise only 6% of the population of the 18th District.³ While COPA recognizes that some of these street stops and traffic stops may have been justified, in their totality, the racial disparity in the stops may be indicative of implicit bias and/or racial profiling. Additionally, COPA has identified the following other patterns of concern:

- Unprofessional and disrespectful conduct towards civilians, including the use of profanities, insults, and threats of force. In several cases, this behavior occurred in front of the officers' sergeant, Erick Seng.

¹ These members include Sgt. Erick Seng and Officers Richard Rodriquez, Joseph Vecchio, Kenneth Sunde, Mario Fuentes, Michael Donnelly, Nicu Tohatan, and Crystina Kittrell.

² The three complaints not included in this analysis involved one call for service and two off-duty domestic incidents.

³ This racial demographic data was compiled by the City's Office of Inspector General and is based on estimates from the US Census Bureau 2017-2021 American Community Survey. See <https://igchicago.org/information-portal/data-dashboards/trr-map-census-data/#dashboard-tabs> (last accessed December 26, 2024).

- The use of pretextual traffic stops for reasons such as stopping too far away from the curb, stopping in a no-parking zone, and seatbelt violations.
- A consistent failure to adhere to CPD policies regarding the documentation and recording of civilian/police encounters, including failing to complete ISRs and TSSS cards, failing to provide ISR receipts, and late BWC activations.

Finally, COPA notes that in addition to the high number of open complaints, many of the closed investigations against these members have resulted in sustained findings. For example, Officer Fuentes has *ten* sustained complaints in the past five years. Several other members of the team, including Sgt. Seng, have between four and eight sustained complaints during the same time period. All of these cases resulted in disciplinary recommendations ranging from a reprimand to a 30-day suspension.⁴ COPA further notes that these totals do not include the numerous SPARs received by each of the members.

Going forward, COPA is requesting your assistance to ensure that all members of the 18th District, and specifically the 1863 tactical team, engage in constitutional policing that is consistent with the mission and values of the Chicago Police Department. Additionally, COPA is requesting that these officers are reminded of their obligation to interact with civilians in a respectful manner, and to consistently document and record all law enforcement activities as required by CPD policy.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns. Thank you in advance for your assistance with this matter.

Regards,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Steffany Hreno.

Steffany Hreno
Director of Investigations

⁴ All of these sustained complaints have gone through Command Channel Review; however, several are still in the grievance process and are not yet considered “final.”