



Department of Justice

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**REMARKS AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL
THOMAS E. PEREZ AT THE SEATTLE POLICE DEPARTMENT INVESTIGATIVE
FINDINGS ANNOUNCEMENT**

SEATTLE

Thank you, Jenny. Civil rights enforcement, here and across the country, is a joint venture between the Civil Rights Division and the local United States Attorney's Office. U.S. Attorney Durkan has been a great partner and a leader in enforcing our nation's civil rights laws. I'm pleased to be with her today for this important announcement.

When we began our investigation of the Seattle Police Department, we had a simple mission – to ensure that Seattle has a police force that reduces crime, respects the Constitution, and earns the confidence of the public it is charged with protecting. These three goals are the guidepost for all of our police reform efforts.

As U.S. Attorney Durkan has noted, our investigation has been independent, exhaustive, and inclusive. Our attorneys, investigators and experts conducted extensive interviews with command staff and rank-and-file officers; participated in ride-alongs with officers; and reviewed thousands of pages of documents. We also met with and interviewed hundreds of community members and attended local advocacy meetings.

Today, we met with Mayor McGinn and Chief Diaz to brief them on the findings of our investigation. We had a very constructive and candid dialogue. From the beginning of our investigation, we have been grateful to have their full cooperation and support. Throughout the investigative process, we provided real time feedback to SPD. For instance, on November 23, we outlined our concerns regarding SPD's application of the *Garrity* rule and how it should be applied in a way that protects officers against self-incrimination while allowing full investigations of misconduct.

Reform takes time. It is not only about a change in policy, but a change in culture. New procedures must be put in place and sustained until they become part of the DNA of the department. Building community trust is a long term and ongoing process. It will require transparency and engagement in order to create a blueprint for sustainable reform.

As with all investigations conducted by the Civil Rights Division we not only determined wrongdoing, but diagnosed why. We looked for root causes of the violations of the constitution

and federal law. We did this to fully understand where the solution lies because our goal is to fix the problem, not to affix the blame.

We peeled the onion to its core, and in doing so, we found concerns with policy, training, supervision, accountability and record keeping that contributed to our finding of a pattern or practice of excessive force and our areas of serious concern regarding biased policing.

In this investigation, two issues particularly jumped out at us:

First, we found that the systems of accountability are broken. Accountability is at the heart of constitutional policing. Systems of supervision and early problem identification permit the timely discovery of deficiencies in conduct, training, or policy. These systems allow a well functioning department to continually learn, correct and improve. They can identify potential problems and fix them.

Those systems are broken in Seattle and need to be repaired. Front line supervisors need more hands on contact with line offices - a problem we are grateful that the department is addressing. I often say that Sergeants are the most important people in a department after the chief.

However, there needs to be more data collected, issues with incomplete and deficient report writing need to be fixed and the time line for the OPA investigative process shortened. The complaint investigation process itself needs to be streamlined and simplified to provide more transparency to the public.

We need to construct systems that will identify early the officers who need correction, assistance or training. It will also provide SPD management necessary tools to identify and fix broken policy or training.

Second, the trust between the Seattle police department and the people of Seattle is broken and must be repaired. Public safety depends on the confidence of the people in the police department. Without this trust public safety is compromised. Constitutional and biased-free policing is a necessary part of any effort to restore that critical trust. Effective policing and constitutional policing go hand in hand.

Now let me discuss where we go from here. We will take these findings, and we will continue our active engagement with Mayor McGinn, Chief Diaz and key stakeholders in the community, the police department, and others throughout Seattle in order to transform our findings into a comprehensive blueprint for sustainable reform. The reform must be part of a court order and must include the assistance of an independent monitor, and we will work with SPD to create these reforms. In the weeks ahead, we will continue to conduct extensive public outreach. We want to hear from the people of Seattle, answer questions, and get your recommendations and input on the path forward.

The SPD has shown a deep commitment to the reform process. We will continue to give feedback to the department in real time.

I would like to address two key sets of stakeholders who play a critical role in reforming this police department. To the men and women of SPD, we honor the difficult work that you do day in and day out and believe that addressing the core systemic problems of SPD will, in the end, make your job easier, safer, and more rewarding. To the people of Seattle, our goal is to help restore the Department into an organization in which the public has confidence and trusts. This is only possible with your continued engagement, and we look forward to continuing to hear your input. We remain optimistic about the changes that are to come. Failure is not an option, but sustainable reform is only possible with your continued engagement. Thank you and I look forward to working with the city of Seattle and the Police Department on making the necessary reforms in order to make the SPD a world class police department.

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