



SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL
CENTRAL STAFF

Seattle Police Department Consent Decree Overview

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PUBLIC SAFETY AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
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SPD Consent Decree – Key Milestones (1/3)

- In response to community-initiated complaints, including those made by 35 community groups, in 2011, DOJ investigated SPD and found that 20% of SPD's serious use-of-force incidents involved the unnecessary or excessive use of force. To address DOJ's findings, the City and DOJ entered into a Consent Decree. Over several years, the parties and the Monitor worked together to develop new, reformed SPD policies and retrain all SPD officers.
- In January 2018, the Court found that SPD's pattern of excessive force had been eliminated and that the City had achieved compliance with the Consent Decree. After achieving compliance, the Consent Decree requires that the City sustain compliance for a period of two years.

SPD Consent Decree – Key Milestones (2/3)

- The two-year sustainment period was expected to run from Jan 2018, to Jan 2020. At that point, in theory, the Consent Decree could be terminated.
- However, the Consent Decree was not terminated because of two significant events: The first event was a new police union contract finalized in Nov. 2018. The Court found that the contract had caused the City to fall out of compliance in the area of accountability.
 - The Court expressed concerns about disciplinary appeals and limits on OIG's and OPA's authority.
 - Since then, the City has made changes in the area of accountability in an effort to address the court's concerns. However, the City has repeatedly recognized in its court filings that broader change will require the City to negotiate new contracts. The City is currently in the process of negotiating new contracts with both unions.

SPD Consent Decree – Key Milestones (3/3)

- The second event was the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, which inspired nationwide demonstrations against police brutality throughout the summer of 2020. City leaders and the public raised concerns about the tactics SPD used in response to protests in Seattle. Before the protests, the City and DOJ had filed a motion to terminate the provisions of the Consent Decree that are not implicated by the Court's non-compliance finding. Days into the protests, however, the City withdrew the motion in order to allow a thorough examination of SPD's uses of force during the protests.
- After the events of 2020, the Court approved a new monitoring plan to reassess SPD's compliance in all areas of the Consent Decree, including crowd management, and to build the capacity of the police accountability system.