

NATIONAL REVIEW

DOJ Report: San Francisco Police Biased against Minorities

By Austin Yack — October 13, 2016

After extensive review, the U.S. Department of Justice declared yesterday that the San Francisco Police Department has exhibited bias against minorities. Although the DOJ assessment found the SFPD to be “an organization of good intention,” it “sometimes failed in execution with respect to accountability and ensuring appropriate cultural standards.” The 400-plus-page review made 272 recommendations, all of which the DOJ’s Office of Community Oriented Policing Services plans to help implement over the next 18 months.

“I’m proud to report that the San Francisco Police Department will accept and implement every single recommendation,” Mayor Ed Lee said. “We must restore trust and these measures are important steps forward.” City officials requested that the DOJ review the SFPD after officers were caught sending racist text messages, and Mario Woods, a 26-year-old black man, was fatally shot by police; when Woods refused to drop his knife, the police opened fire, shooting him 21 times.

Among the 94 findings, the DOJ concluded that African-American drivers were disproportionately targeted during traffic stops, and minorities were involved in the majority of SFPD incidents with use of deadly force. Asian drivers were also more likely than other drivers to be questioned and found with contraband.

The DOJ’s report found that of the eleven times SFPD used deadly force between May 1, 2013, and May 31, 2016, nine of the fatalities were minorities. The DOJ recommended that the department collaborate with research institutions to determine the root of the biases, improve relationships with minority communities, and train law-enforcement officers in ways that minimize their use of deadly force.

Although the DOJ concludes that the SFPD has implicit biases, it does concede that the data is not absolute proof. The data is intended to “illuminate trends in activities or behavior that serve as indicators of potential bias.” The SFPD’s racial composition is similar to that of the city’s

population: Of the 2,000 officers, 51 percent are white, 22 percent are Asian, 15 percent are Hispanic, and 9 percent are black.

The DOJ will provide two progress reports during its 18-month alliance with the SFPD. This DOJ assessment differs from the DOJ's civil-rights-division assessment of the Ferguson, Mo., Police Department, since it is a collaborative review; there is no legal agreement that binds the SFPD to implement all recommended changes.