

# Seattle Police Audit Unit

Ross Bartley  
Sergeant, Seattle Police Department (Ret)

# Synopsis

The City of Seattle and Seattle Police Department  
Audit Function – Early Observations  
The road to DOJ & Settlement Agreement  
The Settlement Agreement  
Impact on the Audit Unit  
Challenges  
Audit Culture









Population: 714,000 (2018)  
608,000 (2010)  
564,000 (2000)

Area: 84 square miles  
Density: >8,000 per sq mile

Metro Area: 3.8 million  
21% increase over 18 years

# Seattle Police Department



9/3/18

Ross Bartley, SPD Audit Unit - Retired

2018

1350 officers

1987 to 2000

1200 officers

# Seattle Police Audit Unit - 2008

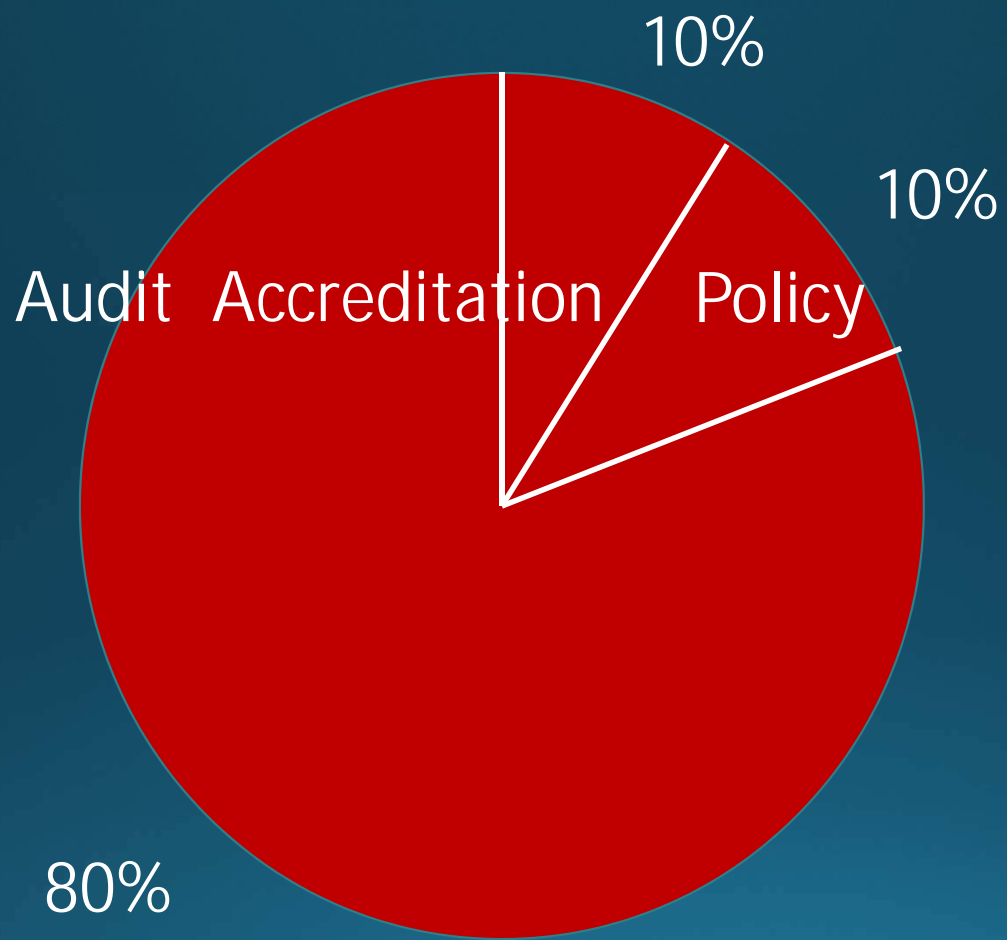
Audit Accreditation & Policy Section

Captain

Sergeant

6 Detectives





# What did we audit?

Only what we were required to audit.

- Ticket books
- Confidential Informant Files
- Evidence (High Value, Drugs, Guns)
- NCIC III Queries
- LinX (Regional Records Sharing – NCIS)
- Department Firearms

# Early observations of the Audit Program

- Lack documentation
- Lack of response to requests.
- Little to no training for audit staff
- No deadlines. No expectation of next audit report.
- No questions (command staff or audited entity)
- Repeated findings

# Early observations of the Audit Program

Just going through the motions

# Audits and SPD Culture

Exit briefing by CALEA assessors:

*“Audits and inspections are what allow the chief to sleep at night.”*

# Audits and SPD Culture

Exit briefing by CALEA assessors:

*"Audits and inspections are what allow the chief to sleep at night."*

The response:

*"Any good commander knows what is going on in their unit and if they need an audit they will ask for one."*

# The Road to DOJ

2002-2003

Three officers killed in Washington with their own weapon in a 14 month period.

- Training has been too focused on control tactics and verbal skills (de-escalation)
- Lack training on how to fight when being attacked
- Past weapon retention training was ineffective

# Training after 2003

- Focus on fighting, strikes, punches
- Retain your weapon by fighting back!
- Take action before the attack
- Firearms – Offensive Tactics– Active Shooter & Terrorism

Little or no training on control tactics, verbal skills, de-escalation methods.



# 2009

Local News

## Seattle officer killed; police searching for suspects

Originally published November 1, 2009 at 5:43 pm | Updated November 2, 2009 at 8:22 am

Local News

## 4 Lakewood officers slain; ex-con sought for questioning

Originally published November 29, 2009 at 7:51 pm | Updated November 30, 2009 at 1:32 am

Local News | Obituaries

## Deputy shot near Eatonville removed from life support, dead at 44

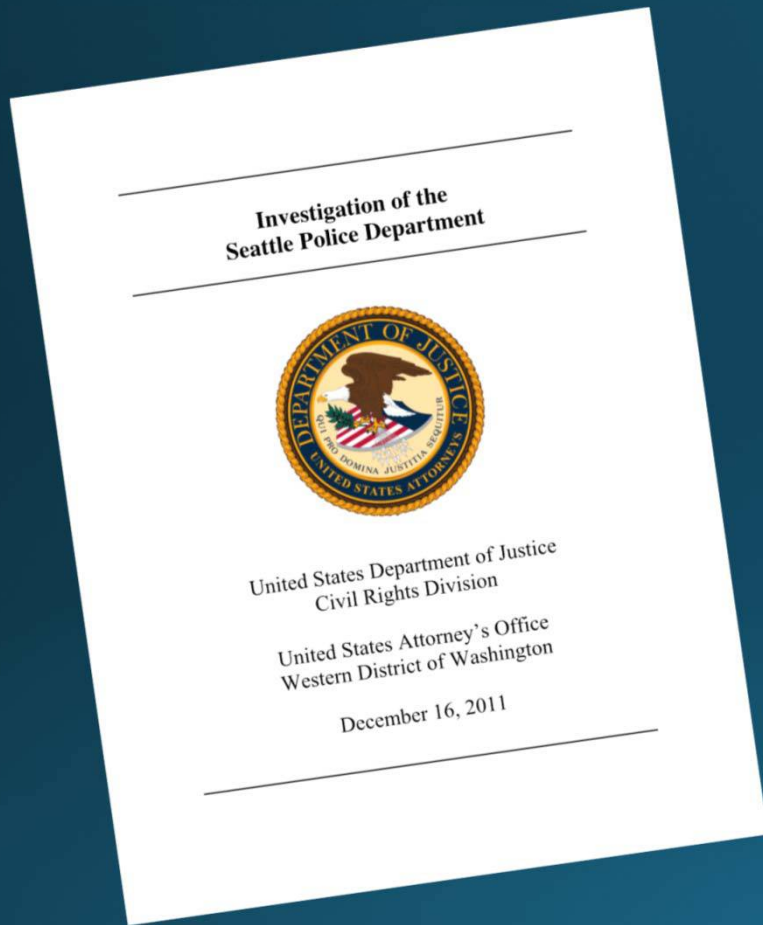
Originally published December 28, 2009 at 5:40 pm | Updated December 28, 2009 at 11:16 pm



2010

# DOJ Investigation Findings

## Pattern and Practice of Unconstitutional Use of Force



# DOJ Findings

- Unconstitutional Use of Force (20%)
- Under Reporting and Inadequate Review
- Supervision (Span of Control, Acting Sgts)
- Lack of Training (Impact Weapons, Supervisors, UoF)
- Crisis Intervention / Lack of De-Escalation
- Encounters with Mentally Ill or Under the Influence
- Citizen Stops (Terry Stops)
- Internal Investigations
- Early Intervention System
- Discriminatory Policing (no finding, but concerned)

# Examples

- Officers lack understanding of when to report use of force
- Inadequate investigation – policy gaps; existing policy not followed
- Patterned, non-descriptive language and euphemisms
- Involved officers identified from other officer statements.
- Terry stops vs Social Contact; ability to articulate RS

# Examples

Things we could have discovered with our own audits.

- Officers lack understanding of when to report use of force
- Inadequate investigation – policy gaps; existing policy not followed
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# Annual Use of Force Analysis

## SPD Annual Report on Use of Force

- Based on outcomes of the UoF reviews
- Low rates of use of force compared to other large cities

DOJ: Flawed review process; inadequate reviews; under reporting

SPD analysis based on the outcomes of a flawed review process is also flawed

*“You fail where you don’t look.”*

# Seattle Police Audit Unit 2008 - 2011

Audit Accreditation & Policy Section

Captain

Sergeant

6 Detectives

# Seattle Police Audit Unit - 2012

## Audit Policy & Research Section

Captain

Lieutenant

Audits & Inspections

Sergeant

5 Detectives

Policy & Research

Sergeant

5 Detectives

# Develop the Audit Program

**Expectation:** SPD audits will be used to measure our progress through the Settlement Agreement

- Need to learn more about audits and inspections
- Find out what other agencies did under a consent decree
- Identify what we need to audit and the frequency (SA focus)
- Train the staff
- Make audits part of the culture of the Department

# Make audits part of the culture of the Department

- Educate commanders
- Deadlines & expectations
- Forum to present audit results and commanders responses
- Make audit findings a tool, but preferably not a hammer
- Establish clear independence within SPD

# Audit Unit Independence

Chief of Police  
Chief Operating Officer  
Compliance & Professional Standards Bureau

**Audit Policy & Research Section**

# Audit Unit Independence

## Compliance & Professional Standards Bureau

**Audit Policy &  
Research  
Section**

Force  
Review  
Section

Force  
Investigation  
Section

Training  
Section



# Audit Unit Independence

## Audit Policy & Research Section (APRS)

APRS submits Annual Audit Plan –  
List of audits approved by Chief and Command Staff

Each audit executed independently by Audit Unit  
APRS commander is the final approver

# New Audits

- Use of Force – Type I and Type II
- Terry Stops
- Supervisor span of control & use of acting sergeants
- Crisis Intervention trained officers
- In Car Video
- Secondary Employment

Objectives and criteria

Collection of audit evidence

Use of Auditing Standards

# Challenges

## Policy Development and Approval

Monitor Team

DOJ

Community Police Commission

Office of Professional Accountability

Federal Judge

Reviewed annually – repeat above

# Challenges

New procedures and processes took more time than expected

Use of Force Review Process

Chain of Command

Force Review Section

Force Review Board

Type II Use of Force audit scheduled to start July 1  
50% had not completed review by July 1.

# Challenges

**SPD audits were not used by the Monitor Team to measure progress.**

- Value and importance of audits diminished
- Responses were improved, but further improvement slowed
- Resources diminished – no training funds, new staffing difficult
- Captain position vacant
- Uneasy about looking at new audit subjects

# Results of a lack of Monitor Team interest

- 2017 – No audits related to the settlement agreement
- Recommended audits of other new topics.

*“It’s not in our best interest at this time to look for other things to audit”*

# January 2018

Full and Effective Compliance  
Entered final phase of Settlement Agreement

- Department to maintain self monitoring capabilities “including audits”
- Develop plan for ‘Sustainment Audits’ for the next 24 months
- Audit plans to be submitted and approved by the court

# Audit Culture

Comes from the top

Has enforced expectations – auditors & auditees

Audits are welcomed – not afraid to look

Audits result in actions

Appropriately staffed at all levels

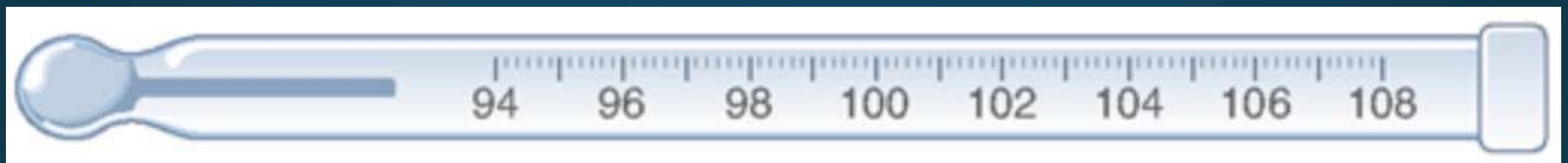
Part of the culture before a Consent Decree

Not a finger waving exercise

Reasonable referrals to Internal Investigations



Audits are preventative medicine.



END