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**OIG AUDIT FINDS GAPS IN SHERIFF'S OFFICE PROCEDURES FOR OFF-DUTY DETAILS,
PROGRESS MADE IN MARDI GRAS COOPERATIVE ENDEAVOR AGREEMENTS**

The **New Orleans Office of Inspector General (OIG)** today released a performance audit finding the Orleans Parish Sheriff's Office (OPSO) did not follow effective policies and procedures regarding off-duty details worked by deputies. The audit also found OPSO and the City have made improvements in creating Cooperative Endeavor Agreements (CEAs) for Mardi Gras coverage, but further progress is needed in OPSO's practices for supplemental Mardi Gras shifts.

OPSO agreed with all recommendations and findings of the OIG audit, except for our finding related to Mardi Gras overtime pay.

In conducting the audit, OIG staff reviewed a random sample of off-duty details worked by OPSO deputies from May 1, 2022, through April 30, 2023. The audit found:

- OPSO did not maintain required documentation for the majority of off-duty details.
- OPSO's Detail Department approved authorization forms that were missing required information and/or proper approval by the deputy's immediate supervisor.
- OPSO's records did not include all details worked by OPSO deputies, and details that were reported did not contain all information required to ensure proper compliance.
- OPSO protocols for off-duty details did not substantially comply with best practices.

Based on these findings, the OIG recommended OPSO:

- Commit additional staff to the administration of off-duty details.
- Consider implementing a centralized contract system to manage off-duty details.
- Update its Standard Operating Procedures to reflect actual procedures and include items supervisors must review when approving off-duty detail authorization forms.
- Annually review policies for off-duty details and incorporate the latest best practices.

In response to our findings, OPSO stated the agency is working to resolve these issues via web-based automation, new leadership of the off-duty detail department, and auditing all policies associated with off-duty details.

Our audit also reviewed all supplemental Mardi Gras coverage worked by OPSO during the 2023 Carnival season. One finding showed OPSO improperly paid its employees overtime calculated with premium pay hours instead of the flat hourly rates established in the 2023 Cooperative Endeavor Agreement (CEA) between OPSO and the City. This resulted in a projected overpayment of \$259,758 in overtime pay and resulted in inequitable pay differences between

OPSO employees and other law-enforcement officers working Carnival shifts. The OIG released a public letter addressed to the City of New Orleans (City) in January 2024 outlining our concerns for all entities spending City funds on overtime during Carnival season.

OPSO disagreed with the OIG's findings of overpayment but agreed the method used to calculate Carnival pay going forward will resolve any differences of opinion. OPSO noted the short timeframe for crafting the 2023 Carnival CEA, which tasked OPSO with a much larger role in Mardi Gras coverage. The CEA resolved the issue for the 2024 Mardi Gras season, and the issue will remain resolved going forward.

Other findings related to Mardi Gras coverage include:

- OPSO's payroll servicer recorded holiday hours as hours worked before the holiday occurred, which resulted in a projected overpayment of \$21,776.
- OPSO employees did not receive the required approvals before: working long hours (over 15 consecutive hours), working long hours without taking the required nine-hour break between shifts, and working supplemental Mardi Gras coverage while on leave.

Based on these findings, the OIG recommended OPSO:

- Verify that premium rate pay is excluded from the regular rate when calculating overtime pay, in accordance with the Fair Labor Standards Act.
- Work with the payroll provider to ensure holidays are credited when they fall on the calendar and holiday hours are recorded correctly before approval of overtime pay.
- Provide training to those approving OPSO employee time cards to only approve exceptions to Standard Operating Procedure when proper approval has been given.
- Have supervisors verify that employees did not take leave when working overtime without proper approval.

OPSO stated the agency has corrected the holiday pay issue and will consider and address the OIG's recommendations regarding Mardi Gras shift coverage.

Inspector General Ed Michel stated:

"Working off-duty details can help law enforcement officers supplement their incomes and strengthen ties with the community, but off-duty details must be worked in an efficient and uniform manner that ensures safety and incorporates best practices. We are pleased that OPSO's CEA with the City for the 2024 Carnival season mitigated potential overpayment issues. We encourage OPSO to take steps to foster greater accountability in off-duty detail practices and procedures and ensure good stewardship of the City's limited resources."

To view the audit, visit nolaog.gov.

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