

December 10, 2025

Superintendent Anne Kirkpatrick
New Orleans Police Department
1615 Poydras Street
New Orleans, LA 70112

RE: Formal Disciplinary Investigation into Allegations of
Cheating in NOPD Promotional Exams

This correspondence is part of an ongoing investigation, examination, audit, inspection, or performance review and is exempt from the Public Records Act until the investigation, examination, audit, inspection, or performance review is complete. See La. R.S. 33:9614 and La. R.S. 44:4.1(B)(18). Please notify this office immediately should you receive a Public Records Request which includes this correspondence.

Dear Superintendent Kirkpatrick,

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) is authorized to comment on “rules, regulations, policies, procedures, and transactions” for the purpose of preventing fraud, waste, and abuse, or promoting efficient and effective government. This letter addresses the results of the OIG’s Formal Disciplinary Investigation (FDI) into allegations of cheating in the New Orleans Police Department’s (NOPD) 2024 promotional process for Captain and Major positions.

Background

On November 18, 2024, Superintendent Ann Kirkpatrick of the NOPD requested the OIG to conduct a Formal Disciplinary Investigation (FDI) into allegations of cheating in NOPD’s 2024 promotional process for Captain and Major positions. The investigation was conducted by the OIG based on several anonymous complaints alleging misconduct in the development and administration of the promotional exams.

Due to multiple vacancies in leadership roles, NOPD began developing promotional exams through the City’s Civil Service Department in July 2024, contracting with the third-party vendor Industrial/Organizational Solutions (IO Solutions) to design and grade Part 1 of the two-part exam. Thirty-three NOPD officers took Part 1 of the exam on July 16, 2024. IO Solutions published Part 1 exam results on July 29, 2024 and a list of the candidates and their exam results was provided to NOPD. Part 2 of the exam was conducted by a selected group of NOPD Deputy Chiefs in September 2024, consisting of a review of each candidate based on their performance evaluations, disciplinary history, and job history. A final combined promotional ranking list of the 33 candidates was completed and provided to Superintendent Kirkpatrick by the end of September 2024.

Allegations and Initiation of Investigation

Upon receiving the final promotional list, Mayor LaToya Cantrell informed Superintendent Kirkpatrick that she had received oral complaints of cheating and bias and instructed that the promotions be suspended. On November 12, 2024, Superintendent Kirkpatrick announced a pause in the promotional process pending further review. The Public Integrity Bureau (PIB) opened cases for the four anonymous complaints. Together those four complaints named 14 NOPD personnel consisting of five officers accused of cheating on the promotional exams, eight NOPD employees who participated as SMEs in the exam's development, as well as the NOPD Superintendent. The OIG subsequently launched an independent investigation into all individuals named in the PIB case files.

In October 2024, four anonymous complaints were received by the Independent Police Monitor (IPM) alleging that NOPD Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) involved in exam development had leaked exam details to certain candidates. An additional anonymous complaint was submitted through NOPD's online system in November 2024. These allegations surfaced after the publication of exam results and just prior to anticipated promotions.

OIG Investigation and Findings

OIG investigators conducted comprehensive interviews with all 14 NOPD members identified in the PIB case files. Each was questioned regarding their knowledge or participation in cheating or preferential treatment related to the exams. All denied any wrongdoing. The investigation found no evidence supporting the allegations of cheating, exam manipulation, or information sharing between SMEs and candidates.

Additionally, the OIG conducted interviews with 19 other exam participants. Each officer denied receiving or witnessing any unauthorized assistance. One respondent described the exam as the fairest test they had ever taken while employed with NOPD. None could provide firsthand or verifiable information substantiating the allegations.

OIG investigators also interviewed all personnel who received or processed the anonymous complaints and examined relevant NOPD and personal email communications, along with metadata. No evidence or credible testimony emerged to substantiate claims of cheating or preferential treatment. To ensure transparency, Superintendent Kirkpatrick issued an internal email inviting any complainant to contact the OIG confidentially. The OIG was not contacted by any members of the NOPD with further information related to the allegations.

When investigators requested an interview with Mayor Cantrell, who was the only person claiming to know the identity of any complainant, she declined to participate, responding, "No, thank you."

Analysis and Concerns

The OIG found that all anonymous complaints appeared only after the final promotional rankings were distributed (two months after the exam results were published), suggesting possible ulterior motives. The timing, lack of factual support, and refusal of complainants to come forward under confidentiality raised concerns about the legitimacy of the allegations. The investigation concluded that the complaints were largely based on hearsay, rumor, and conjecture rather than evidence.

The OIG expressed concern that the current NOPD policy prohibiting promotion of officers with pending serious complaints, though intended to uphold integrity, could inadvertently enable individuals to manipulate the process. Anonymous, baseless complaints can be used strategically to block qualified candidates from promotion, delaying leadership appointments and affecting departmental readiness.

This risk was realized in this case: due to unsubstantiated anonymous complaints, NOPD leadership vacancies persisted through critical periods including a terrorist incident (January 1, 2025), Super Bowl security preparations, and upcoming Mardi Gras operations.

Conclusions

After an exhaustive review, the OIG determined by a preponderance of the evidence that all allegations of cheating, preferential treatment, or misconduct were unfounded. None of the 14 NOPD employees investigated violated the Code of Ethics, Civil Service Rules, or NOPD policies.

Recommendations

1. **Anonymous Complaint Reform:** NOPD should establish a protocol that allows anonymous complaints to be received and investigated without halting the promotional process, unless credible evidence of misconduct is found.
2. **Accountability for Abuse of the Complaint Process:** NOPD should develop measures to identify and discipline individuals who misuse the complaint system for personal or competitive advantage.
3. **Periodic Compliant Process Review:** NOPD, in coordination with the OIG, should explore ways to mitigate the risk of misuse of the complaint process without impacting valid complainants.

Summary Statement

The OIG's investigation concluded that NOPD's 2024 promotional exams for Captain and Major positions were conducted fairly, without evidence of cheating or preferential treatment. The OIG found that the anonymous allegations lacked credibility and appeared to have been made after results were known, likely to influence or obstruct the promotion process. The OIG emphasized the need for safeguards to prevent misuse of the anonymous complaint system while maintaining accountability and integrity in future promotional processes.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Edward Michel". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Edward Michel, CIG
Inspector General
City of New Orleans