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OIG FINDS NOPD DID NOT ADEQUATELY OVERSEE OVERTIME USE, RESULTING IN HIGHER RISK OF PAYROLL FRAUD

Today, the OIG released a public letter finding that the New Orleans Police Department (NOPD) and the City did not adequately budget and monitor the NOPD's overtime hours. This lack of proper oversight resulted in an increased risk of payroll fraud as well as other forms of fraud, waste, and abuse.

Today's letter stems from an OIG review of the NOPD's overtime practices and procedures from January 1, 2025, to July 31, 2025. In conducting the review, the OIG examined national best practices, Chief Administrative Office (CAO) policies of the City of New Orleans, and NOPD policies and procedures.

Between January 1 and July 31, 2025, NOPD officers reported more than 260,000 overtime hours, costing the City more than $16.4 million over and above officers' regular salaries. The vast majority of these hours were essential, providing overtime for events like Mardi Gras and the Super Bowl, as well as emergencies like the January 2025 snowstorm.

However, OIG evaluators found that during the review period, the NOPD did not adhere to the CAO policy for overtime expenditures and lacked a sufficient, consistent system for oversight of overtime usage.

CAO policy requires each department, including the NOPD, to stay within the amount of overtime appropriated for that department in the City's operating budget. Departments are required to submit monthly plans for overtime spending and obtain approval for overtime expenditures. However, the NOPD did not submit the required overtime budget reports or work with the City and CAO to adjust the Department's budget to accommodate overtime expenses.

In addition, OIG evaluators found the NOPD did not have a clear, consistent process for allotting overtime. Instead, the Department used a blanket distribution system, allotting each NOPD district the same amount of discretionary overtime hours per week, despite differences in operational need.

The OIG also found a lack of consistency in how various NOPD districts and units oversaw or accounted for overtime, which may impact the NOPD's ability to plan and budget for overtime.

Finally, there was no consistent process used to verify that officers worked the overtime hours they claimed.

The OIG's recommendations include the following:

- The NOPD should work closely with the CAO to ensure the City budget includes funding for mandatory anticipated overtime for large events like Mardi Gras and Jazz Fest.
- The NOPD and CAO should ensure funding for overtime in response to unanticipated events, such as last year's snowstorm and terrorist attack. These budget allocations should be based on previous years' usage of overtime hours, as well as previous unanticipated events.
- The NOPD should allocate discretionary overtime hours based on the operational needs of each district or unit.
- The NOPD should more closely oversee or manage overtime pay. A more robust review of overtime usage should be implemented at the immediate supervisory level, and at the level just above that.
- Finally, the NOPD should proactively share its overtime data to increase transparency and encourage faith in the department's stewardship of City funding. For example, the NOPD could create a publicly accessible dashboard that displays overtime usage.

Inspector General Ed Michel stated:

"Ensuring public safety is one of the most important functions of City government and requires significant resources. However, these resources must be used responsibly and efficiently and for their intended purposes. As such, it is critical that the NOPD and the City properly manage its overtime usage, including uniform methods of oversight and verification of overtime throughout the Department. Otherwise, future overtime budget planning and accountability will be ineffective."

To view the letter, visit NolaOIG.gov.

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