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Mayor

Department of Police · City of Chicago
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David O. Brown
Superintendent of Police

March 30, 2021

Deborah Witzburg
Deputy Inspector General for Public Safety
Office of Inspector General
740 North Sedgwick Street, Suite 200
Chicago, Illinois 60654

Re: Follow-up Inquiry on the Chicago Police Department's "Gang Database"

Dear Deputy Inspector General Witzburg:

I write to express my concerns with the Public Safety Inspector General's decision to move forward with the publication of its Follow up Inquiry on the Chicago Police Department's "Gang Database" without completing the interviews suggested by the Department. The goals of the Public Safety Inspector General (PSIG), as publicly stated, are to enhance the effectiveness of public safety, protect civil liberties and civil rights, and increase the public's confidence in the system. A follow up report issued in a manner that contains outdated information and is incomplete contradicts these goals and fails the residents of the City of Chicago as well as the hardworking men and women of the Chicago Police Department.

The vetting, input, retention, and use of gang information is just one of many areas that the Department is working diligently to reform. As we move forward in our quest to repair relationships with the community, it is important that we all understand the limitations placed on the Department to move forward from the wrongs of yesterday to a place where the Department stands as an example to the country of what constitutional policing is and should be. These limitations are in a variety of areas including financial limitations, personnel constraints, and capacity concerns, not to mention the physical and emotional toll that this past year has taken on our members. We have been fortunate to work with partners who have afforded us the grace and support needed to move forward. These partners worked tirelessly with the Department as it faced unprecedented circumstances posed by a global pandemic and civil unrest. I was hopeful that PSIG would work together toward the reform that this city so deserves, but the issuance of this follow-up report, in this manner, counters this notion.

As you were advised, since the time you completed your interviews for this follow-up report, the Department has taken significant strides toward implementation of the recommendations made in PSIG's initial April 2019 report. At the time you were conducting your follow-up work, the Department had a significant transition of leadership. Not only were we working to move many of these resources previously held by the Chicago Police Department to the newly formed Public Safety Administration, but the Deputy Director of the Strategic Initiatives Division resigned requiring further reorganization of the responsibilities of this project. When you interviewed members of the Department, that reorganization had not yet been finalized. It is now finalized, which has resulted in clear ownership of the CEIS, the execution of a plan to build the backend technology that will support the information system, and the development of a timeline for implementation.

This project has been moved to the Bureau of Counterterrorism and Deputy Chief Thomas Mills has been assigned as the project lead. As it currently stands, the new criminal enterprise database will be fully developed by September 2021 and training for vetting and inputting information will begin in September. It has always been the Department's plan that at that point, all old and unvetted gang information will be walled off and the Criminal Enterprise Information System will be created, consistent with the final order. In order to reach this deadline, the Department had to create a new system to allow for the implementation of these changes and this new system took time to build and test.

Because the follow-up report does not include any additional recommendations, the Department is not allowed a formal response under the municipal code; however, it is important to note the inaccuracies contained in this report. One such inaccuracy is that the Department had a second version of the CEIS order in July 2020 that was not published. This July 2020 version was not published because it was a working internal draft created based on the technological limitations we faced. Once these technology issues are resolved, the final version of the draft order will be completed and posted for public review. To state that the Department effectively misled the public on a key policy concern is false and one can only assume that PSIG is intentionally chipping away at the strides the Department has taken to rebuild public confidence during an incredibly tumultuous time in our city's and country's history.

I hope that as we move forward toward a common goal of reforming CPD that the Public Safety Inspector General will serve as an unbiased and fair partner in this effort.

Sincerely,

David O. Brown
Superintendent of Police