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New Orleans inspector general accuses police chief of stifling access, ignoring law

By Bruce Egger, The Times-Picayune

March 04, 2010, 12:28PM

Saying that New Orleans Police Superintendent Warren Riley has "repeatedly refused to comply with the law" and assist the city's fledgling independent police monitor's office, **Inspector General Ed Quatrevaux** on Wednesday called on Mayor Ray Nagin "to instruct the superintendent to cooperate with the police monitor and obey the law."

Nagin's office responded that the mayor will talk with Riley but suggested that the two men, both of whom will leave office within two months, may well continue to refuse to provide the monitor's office with some of the documents it wants to see. A spokesman cited **federal investigations of the Police Department** as the reason.

The **police monitor's office, authorized by a law passed in 2008** by the City Council and signed by Nagin, is supposed to oversee Police Department investigations of alleged police misconduct.

In a **letter to Nagin** released by the inspector general's office Wednesday evening, Quatrevaux said there is an "odious smell hanging over the NOPD" as a result of last week's revelation of a cover-up of what happened on the Danziger Bridge in September 2005, when two civilians were killed and four others wounded by police officers.

Quatrevaux said that smell "will affect all police officers, good and bad, until someone the public trusts certifies that the NOPD is properly investigating allegations of police misconduct."

After former Lt. Michael Lohman pleaded guilty in federal court to one count of conspiring to obstruct justice by participating in a cover-up of the Danziger Bridge shootings, Riley said he was shocked and that Lohman's action "disgraced the uniform worn by law enforcement officers."



New Orleans Inspector General Ed Quatrevaux wrote that there is 'an odious smell hanging over the NOPD.'



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New Orleans Police Superintendent Warren Riley, right, has refused to comply with the

Nevertheless, Quatrevaux said, Riley and some of his aides have made "continued efforts to impede" the work of the monitor's office by refusing to release documents that Quatrevaux said the law makes clear the office is entitled to see.

"The superintendent said he is shocked by the misconduct of some of his officers, but ordered the very officers charged with investigating complaints of misconduct to ignore the law as it applies to the NOPD" and thus prevented the monitor's office "from performing its duties under the law," Quatrevaux wrote.

Noting that the law says a city employee who fails to cooperate with the monitor's office is subject to investigation and potentially discharge, Quatrevaux asked Nagin to respond to his letter by March 17.

law and cooperate with the city's independent police monitor, Quatrevaux charges.

Quatrevaux's letter and related documents are available at his Web site, www.nolaoig.org. Click on "OIG in the News" and look for "Public Letters."

Nagin's press office issued a statement Wednesday night saying the mayor "will have a follow-up conversation with Superintendent Riley. However, with multiple federal investigations of the Police Department currently under way, the inspector general cannot be guaranteed unfettered access until those federal investigations are completed."

Quatrevaux's requests for files and cooperation, however, have little to do with pending federal probes, and his office is supposed to have access to files on all complaints against police.

Bob Young, commander of the NOPD's Public Information Office, asked a reporter for a copy of Quatrevaux's letter and time to respond Wednesday evening. After receiving the letter, though, he did not issue any response.

Riley, who was named police chief by Nagin in late September 2005, plans to retire from the NOPD when Nagin leaves office in early May.

Mayor-elect Mitch Landrieu last week announced creation of a task force to conduct a nationwide search for a new police chief. He asked the group to recommend three finalists in time for him to make the final selection before he is inaugurated as mayor May 3.

The police monitor is supposed to act as an independent watchdog of NOPD actions, albeit with limited powers. The monitor is responsible for reviewing "civilian and internally generated complaints, internal investigations, discipline, use of force and in-custody deaths." He or she cannot directly investigate allegations of police misconduct but can "assess the quality and timeliness" of department investigations and recommend the department reopen investigations if they were "not thorough or fair."

The monitor also can "review and analyze the numbers and types of complaints; ... review specific issues regarding supervision, training and discipline; conduct relevant pattern analysis; and (perform) other tasks to ensure New Orleans Police Department accountability, transparency and responsiveness to the community it serves."

Although the NOPD and police unions traditionally were hostile to attempts to institute outside review of officers' actions, the police and citizen groups pushing for the monitor agreed in July 2008 on a compromise spelling out what powers the new office would have.

Interim Inspector General Leonard Odom selected Neely Moody, a senior member of the inspector general's staff, as the first police monitor in August 2009, but a month later both Odom and Moody quit amid growing controversy about how Odom was running his office. The council last week created new procedures for appointing and, if needed, removing the monitor.

Meanwhile, the deputy monitor, Holly Wiseman, also selected last year, has remained on the job and has tried to set up the basic functions of the office. Wiseman, a former state and federal prosecutor, also has met with Riley, who publicly questioned her motives and resisted her ideas about how the office can work with the NOPD.

Quatrevaux said last month that the new police monitor could be chosen by the end of April. He anticipated that a list of candidates will be whittled down in early April and three finalists will be invited for interviews. Under the new rules approved by the council, the finalists must attend two community meetings to introduce themselves to the public and answer questions.

One of Quatrevaux's complaints in his letter to Nagin is that the heads of the NOPD's internal affairs unit, the Public Integrity Bureau, have refused to hand over officer disciplinary records, among other files.

His letter says Wiseman met with Deputy Chief Bruce Adams and Capt. John Thomas on Feb. 22 and that Adams told Wiseman the Public Integrity Bureau was "still under a prohibition against cooperating with the police monitor, and that it would remain until there was a change in administrations."

Riley and Adams have fought the release of internal disciplinary records before. In March 2009, a Civil

District Court judge ordered the city to release Public Integrity Bureau files on 10 officers to The Times-Picayune, in response to a lawsuit filed by the newspaper.

"Public records are public records are public records, and the citizens of this city have a right to know what's in them," Judge Robin Giarrusso said after the hearing.

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