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NEW JERSEY SETTLES ALLEGATIONS OF DISCRIMINATION BY STATE POLICE

UNDER JUSTICE DEPARTMENT AGREEMENT

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- The State of New Jersey has agreed to implement new policies and procedures to ensure that the New Jersey State Police do not discriminate against minorities when making traffic stops along New Jersey's roads, under an agreement reached today with the Justice Department.

The agreement, filed along with a complaint in U.S. District Court in Trenton, New Jersey, establishes requirements for traffic enforcement, vehicle searches, data collection, training, supervision, complaint procedures and public reporting for the State Police. Today's agreement, which must be approved by the court, resolves an investigation by the Justice Department into allegations that New Jersey state troopers engaged in a pattern of discriminatory traffic enforcement.

"This agreement will establish real safeguards against racially discriminatory stops and searches for motorists who drive on New Jersey's highways," said Bill Lann Lee, Acting Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights. "We are pleased the state has worked together with us to develop such a comprehensive agreement."

As a result of the agreement, the state will:

- prohibit state troopers from relying on race, national origin or ethnicity when making traffic stops and initiating any post-stop actions, except when a suspect has been identified in part by their race, national origin or ethnicity;
- require state troopers to have reasonable suspicion and written consent from individuals before initiating any consensual search;
- document the race, ethnic origin and gender of all motor vehicle drivers who are the subject of a traffic stop, the reason for the stop and the nature of any post-stop activities;
- ensure that supervisors regularly review trooper reports on post-stop actions and patrol car video tapes, and take corrective measures where appropriate;

- implement a "management awareness" program that uses computerized information on traffic stops, misconduct investigations, and other matters to identify patterns of problematic conduct and allow supervisors to take corrective measures when appropriate;
- make its complaint system more accessible to the public and ensure misconduct allegations are investigated fully and fairly and discipline is imposed when appropriate;
- increase training on supervisory issues, communications skills, and cultural diversity for troopers and their supervisors; and,
- issue semi-annual reports which will provide traffic stop statistics by race and ethnicity, as well as information on complaint investigations.

In addition, the parties will select an independent monitor who will ensure that the state is in compliance with the agreement. The monitor will issue regular reports to the court, the state and the Justice Department.

"This agreement embodies a giant step forward in eliminating any police actions that might discriminate against racial or ethnic minorities," said Robert Cleary, U.S. Attorney in New Jersey. "Our message should be clear -- such disparate treatment will not be tolerated."

This is the fourth police misconduct lawsuit filed by the Justice Department. The first two cases, against the city of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and the city of Steubenville, Ohio, also were resolved through settlement agreements. The third case, against the city of Columbus, Ohio, was filed in October 1999. Under the 1994 Crime Bill, the Justice Department has the authority to file civil suits against law enforcement agencies that engage in a pattern of misconduct. The Department also has the authority to file suit against law enforcement agencies that receive federal funds and engage in a pattern of discrimination. In addition to the four cases already mentioned, the Department is currently investigating a number of other law enforcement agencies across the country.