



128 Dorrance Street, Suite 400
Providence, RI 02903
Phone: (401) 831-7171
Fax: (401) 831-7175
www.riaclu.org
info@riaclu.org

July 16, 2021

The Hon. Kenneth Hopkins, Mayor
and Cranston City Council
c/o Cranston City Hall
869 Park Avenue
Cranston, RI 02910

Dear Mayor Hopkins and City Council Members:

I am writing to ask that you take immediate action to halt what appears to be a long-standing and flagrant violation of the law by the Cranston Police Department. This transgression, which the ACLU contacted the Police Chief about six months ago but has yielded no reply, is not only deeply problematic in and of itself, it also leaves us with little doubt that it has contributed to a serious racial profiling problem in the City.

Specifically, it was brought to our attention earlier this year that, for some time, the police department has been enforcing a traffic stop quota policy among its officers. According to departmental emails we obtained, police officers have for years been ordered on a regular basis to stop a minimum of two cars during their patrol shifts.

For over a decade, however, Rhode Island has unambiguously banned traffic stop quotas. R.I.G.L. §31-27-25 explicitly prohibits a police department's establishment of "any requirement regarding the number of arrests or investigative stops made...by an officer regarding motor vehicle traffic or parking violations."

To see a police department brazenly violate the law in this manner is unconscionable. Worse, it undoubtedly helps explain the Cranston Police Department's consistently disturbing racial disparities in stopping and searching cars, as documented by annual analyses of traffic stop data performed pursuant to state law by Central Connecticut State University.

Every day, virtually every one of us breaks a traffic law — whether it is going five miles over the speed limit, failing to put on a turn signal, or accidentally crossing the center lane for a moment. When police are put in the position of choosing which cars to pull over merely for the sake of meeting an arbitrary quota, rather than for a legitimate public safety need, it can only encourage discriminatory treatment of motorists. In addition, the anxiety and trauma that can be generated by a police stop goes without saying. For most people, it is an unnerving experience, but for people of color, it is particularly fraught.

In short, the implementation of a traffic stop quota mandate is deeply problematic as a matter of policy, but even more so when it involves a police department itself violating the law, and doing so in a way that likely generates racially discriminatory consequences. Particularly at a time when there is widespread public agreement about the need for greater police accountability, the department's actions can only promote disrespect for, and cynicism about, law enforcement practices.

We therefore request that you exercise your executive and legislative authority, respectively, to order an immediate halt to this practice, investigate its origins and the reasons it has continued for so long in violation of the law, and take all other necessary and appropriate steps to ensure that those responsible for this law-breaking are held accountable. This investigation should proceed even if the Department indicates it plans to halt, or has halted, this long-standing practice.

Enclosed as background are two departmental emails – one from 2017 and another from 2020 – corroborating that police officers have been ordered on a regular basis to stop a minimum of two cars during their patrol shifts, as well as the two unanswered letters I wrote Chief Winquist earlier this year asking him to halt this practice.

I look forward to hearing back from you about this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steven Brown". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Steven Brown
Executive Director

cc: Col. Michael Winquist

Enclosures

From: Robert Quirk

Sent: Friday, June 09, 2017 3:57 PM

To: Gerard Carnevale <gcarnevale@cranstonpolice.com>; Russell Henry <rhenry@cranstonpolice.com>

Cc: Todd Patalano <tpatalano@cranstonpolice.com>; Robert Quirk <rquirk@cranstonpolice.com>

Subject: Info

Captains,

Please advise the Patrol Supervisors under your respective command that they should be closely monitoring officers on their shifts to ensure that they are conducting a minimum of two traffic stops during the course of their shift. There have been more than a few occasions according to the DSB's, that those stops have not been attained. From this point forward, the number of stops are below the minimum, the OIC on that particular shift will be required to provide you with an explanation and also include a breakdown for each officer's activity. The only exception to the number of car stops falling below the minimum shall be a significant event that ties up officers for a considerable amount of time during their shift.

Also, several officers have recently been observed on car stops and at calls for service not wearing their uniform hats. This also includes several of the newer officers. Please have the Patrol Supervisors once again inform the officers on their shifts that they are expected to conform with the uniform policy.

Please advise me as soon as the supervisors under your command have been notified of the directives. Thank you.

Respectfully,

Major Robert Quirk
Cranston Police Department
401.477.5003 (Office)
401.477.5187 (Fax)
rquirk@cranstonpolice.com



Carnevale Gerard

1:00 PM

To: Sworn All >

FW: Considerations for implementing car stops

All,

Please find the attached guideline for making traffic stops during the remaining COVID19 Pandemic.

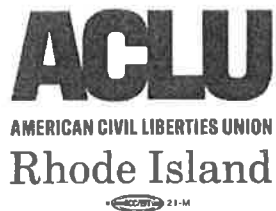
Also the department will reinstate the CARE program, the overnight parking detail and Rip Tide detail. The two car stops per shift will also begin again.

Roll calls will return to the Department Rollcall room beginning tomorrow, 7/1/20.

Thank you for your attention in this matter.

Respectfully,

Captain Gerard Carnevale
Cranston Police Department
401.477.5032 (Office)
401.477.5113 (Fax)



128 Dorrance Street, Suite 400
Providence, RI 02903
Phone: (401) 831-7171
Fax: (401) 831-7175
www.riaclu.org
info@riaclu.org

February 15, 2021

Col. Michael Winqvist
Cranston Police Department
5 Garfield Avenue
Cranston, RI 02920

Dear Chief Winqvist:

Our office recently received copies of the enclosed two emails – spanning a period of three years – indicating that your Department has had a practice of requiring police officers to stop a minimum of two cars during their patrol shifts.

I would appreciate learning the basis for your Department's imposition of this policy. We would also ask that it be immediately halted.

If you believe we have somehow misconstrued the text of these emails, I would, of course, welcome being so apprised.

Thank you in advance for your prompt attention to this matter.

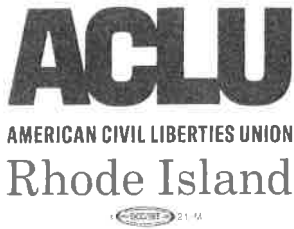
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steven Brown".

Steven Brown
Executive Director

Enclosures

cc: Christopher Millea, City Solicitor



128 Dorrance Street, Suite 400
Providence, RI 02903
Phone: (401) 831-7171
Fax: (401) 831-7175
www.riaclu.org
info@riaclu.org

May 25, 2021

Col. Michael Winqvist
Cranston Police Department
5 Garfield Avenue
Cranston, RI 02920

Dear Chief Winqvist:

I am belatedly following up on a letter I sent you back on February 15th raising concerns about an apparent departmental practice of requiring police officers to stop a minimum of two cars during their patrol shifts. In that letter, a copy of which I have enclosed, I inquired about the basis for your Department's imposition of this policy and asked that it be halted. I have not heard back from you about this but remain very interested in a response.

Because of the importance of this matter, I would therefore greatly appreciate hearing back from you about it at the earliest opportunity. Thank you.

Sincerely,


Steven Brown
Executive Director

Enclosure