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**THIRD GMU OFFICER FILES COMPLAINT ALLEGING
PATTERN AND PRACTICE OF POLICE CORRUPTION
AT GMU, DETAILING TIMELINE OF RETALIATION**

Brian Morrison, a Master Police Officer at George Mason University (GMU) Police Department, has filed suit in Fairfax Circuit Court – Case No. 2021-07808 – alleging a pattern and practice of police corruption at GMU. His seven claims against GMU and three GMU employees seek a total of \$4,150,000 in nominal, compensatory, and punitive damages, as well as statutory damages, equitable and injunctive relief, and statutory costs and attorney’s fees.

Morrison is the third GMU police officer to allege a pattern and practice of police corruption at GMU in 2021. The circumstances of Morrison’s complaint are distinct from the allegations of the previous officers – Lieutenant David Ganley and Captain Philip Surber. However, the pattern of behavior alleged by the GMU Police Department and administration shows consistent themes of retaliation.

The retaliation alleged by Brian Morrison came in many forms. Instances include denials of required training and wrongful demotions, as well as wrongful discipline, fraudulent internal affairs investigations, defamation, fundamental denials of due process, and even threats of criminal investigation.

The Morrison complaint details a history of retaliation beginning in 2016 and persisting to the present day. The chronology in the complaint demonstrates that retaliatory actions correspond to Morrison’s reports of wrongdoing within the department, Morrison’s inquiries to outside investigating agencies, and Morrison’s utilization of the state grievance procedure. The retaliation came through discipline and written reprimands. Some threats of reprimand concern the rights of the public, as well. For example, one retaliatory reprimand chastised Morrison for being “unsure” of whether he smelled marijuana during a traffic stop of a minor woman of color on March 17, 2020. As detailed in the complaint, every allegation against him involves either false allegations or incorrect applications of GMU Police Department policy.

Potential Administrative Suspension for Questioning Illegal Police Actions

The latest retaliatory incident has left Morrison administratively suspended, shutting him out of his credentials and requiring him to surrender his gun and badge to his superiors. The reason for the administrative suspension is unknown, but Morrison suspects it is related to a concern he shared

regarding the actions of the GMU Police Department. Morrison was concerned about official instructions from Chief Carl Rowan, directing uniformed GMU Police Officers to “think outside the box” and help the GMU administration investigate violations of COVID-19-related University Life rules. These investigations by uniformed police officers occurred outside of the territorial jurisdiction of the GMU Police Department.

GMU claims the suspension’s purpose is to allow the GMU Police Department to conduct an internal affairs investigation of Morrison. However, no notice of the questionable actions has been given to Morrison at this time. Instead, the official notices cite several hundred pages of federal, state, and local policies and other regulations that Morrison “allegedly” violated. Contrary to State HR Policy 1.60, GMU has not provided Morrison with “a summary or description of the evidence of the offense for which the corrective action is being contemplated.” Further, Morrison’s administrative suspension has persisted for more than 80 days, contrary to the requirements of State HR Policy 1.60, which limits such suspensions to a duration of 15 days.

Regarding the present suspension, a separate action has been concurrently filed in Fairfax Circuit Court – Case No. 2021-07132 – so that Morrison can receive clarity on his due process rights in this matter. Though Morrison is willing to cooperate with any legitimate GMU PD internal affairs investigation, he and his counsel must receive appropriate notice of the allegations against him, due to the potential criminal charges that have been invoked by the GMU Police Department.

Improper Use of Internal Affairs Investigations by GMU PD

Brian Morrison’s complaint also sheds light on the GMU Police Department’s use of internal affairs investigations. This is a factual matter in both the Ganley/Surber and Morrison complaints.

The Morrison complaint cites previously unknown information from a confidential “Peer Report of the George Mason University Department of Police and Public Safety,” completed in November of 2020. Among other recommendations, this document suggests that the GMU Police Department take the following steps to correct current practices in the GMU PD internal affairs department:

As a suggestion, the reviewers feel that the processes associated with internal investigations and complaint reviews be formalized in an updated policy. This should be a priority. [emphasis in original] The formalized process should include a statement and record-keeping on what cases will be investigated, and by who (internal affairs or assigned back to supervisor), and include final outcome details and dates. **The Chief should have an awareness of complaints received against the department, but should not deviate from policy with regard to process unless there are extenuating circumstances.** [emphasis added]

GMU Police Chief Carl Rowan’s deviation from proper policy – sometimes alone and sometimes in concert with other actors at GMU – are alleged in both the Ganley/Surber and Morrison complaints. As is clear from the allegations of these officers, the GMU Police Department continues to use the internal affairs department as a punitive weapon to punish officers who report problems and wrongdoing through the proper channels at GMU. The GMU administration has approved and sanctioned these actions by its willful failure to correct this wrongdoing. GMU has also prevented administrative relief by fundamentally denying due process to the complaining officers. Facing these obstacles, the officers seek justice in the Fairfax Circuit Court.