

Reports that officers were having sex with teens not investigated until evidence appeared, Cleveland's assistant chief says

By Judy Walton

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Cleveland Assistant Police Chief Gary Hicks
Sean McRae Loftin

The assistant police chief in Cleveland, Tenn., says there were “no facts or evidence” in May of 2008 to start investigating whether some officers were having sex with teenage girls and giving them pills and alcohol.

In an emailed statement, Assistant Chief Gary Hicks said that, “in May of 2008, after consulting with Chief Snyder, I had a meeting with the four officers that were rumored to be conducting themselves in behaviors unbecoming and unacceptable. There were no facts or evidence, at that time, to support the rumors.

“Over the next few months, the situation was monitored. Once facts supported rumor, Chief Snyder launched an Internal Affairs investigation that led to the dismissal and prosecution of three officers of this department.

“From May, 2008 until the conclusion of the investigation, Chief Snyder handled this situation appropriately.”

He said a [Tuesday Times Free Press article](#) by reporter Todd South, “in my opinion, does not reflect the entire context of my testimony.”

Hicks referred media to the transcript of the Nov. 17 hearing. According to attorneys, the transcript of the hearing is being prepared and may be available next week.

South’s article was based on Hicks’ court testimony on Nov. 17 in Hamilton County Circuit Court in a lawsuit brought by fired former detective Duff Brumley.

Hicks testified that in May 2008, Snyder told him to meet with officers Nathan Thomas, Dennis Hughes and Jonathan Hammons and their supervisors over the allegations. Hicks testified that at a meeting at the police department, he wrote on a whiteboard for them to stop any unbecoming behavior, but he did not speak to them. He said the officers and supervisors nodded at the message but did not speak to him.

There is no record of the May meeting in records the Cleveland Police Department provided to the Times Free Press.

On Wednesday, Snyder [accused the Times Free Press](#) of a “grossly inaccurate” account of the trial testimony. He said he began the internal affairs investigation as soon as he learned of allegations the officers were abusing prescription drugs and having sex with underage girls.

Times Free Press Manager Alison Gerber noted in a statement that Snyder had been asked repeatedly to comment on the investigation before the story was published, but he declined.

Cleveland Police Department records show the investigation began in December after an officer was shot in the hand during a pill party at another officer’s home. The Tennessee Bureau of Investigation joined the probe into the shooting and opened a separate case into allegations of sexual abuse in January, according to a TBI spokeswoman.

See Thursday’s Times Free Press for complete coverage.

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