

MPD officers relieved of duty have a "Police Payday"

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2015 cops in TN

(WMC-TV) – Some Memphis police officers have been accused of breaking the laws they swore to uphold. While they were off the streets they were on the city payroll, collecting checks funded by taxpayers.

"That's not conduct we condone as an agency," said Memphis Police Director Toney Armstrong

"A lot of times officers are suspended because there's an investigation going on," stated Memphis Police Association President Michael Williams. "You don't want officers on the street if they're under investigation."

According to documents provided by the city attorney, those investigations can take months to resolve.

In November of 2012, officer Cornelius Monger was indicted for aggravated sexual battery involving three young girls.

City records indicate he's making \$213 a day while he awaits trial in December.

The city paid officer Ryan Mendoza \$786.12 to stay at home after he was arrested for DUI.

Many officers are re-assigned.

Lieutenant Dennis Toll, the subject of an FBI investigation since October of 2012, has collected more than \$50,000 in 8 months working a desk job while his case is pending.

"They're getting paid a full commissioned salary when they're really doing a job that a lesser paid lay-person could do," said city councilman Jim Strickland.

Memphis Chief Administrative Officer George Little says rushing an investigation can cost the city more if a wrongfully terminated employee sues the city.

"The law protects all of us and so even the accused officers are afforded the protection of law," said Little. "If in fact we do need to bring charges we want to make sure that there's a solid case and not take further taxpayers money."

But while they're facing criminal charges, officers aren't required to incriminate themselves by cooperating with internal affairs investigators. They can't be fired or reinstated until their criminal case is over.

Attorney Howard Manis has clients whose loved ones were injured or killed by Memphis officers.

"While someone is being investigated for possible criminal conduct we're paying them," asked Manis. "All the time knowing that these officers have had absolutely nothing done to them and that they are basically having a paid vacation."

What happens to all that pay if an officer is ultimately convicted of a crime then terminated?

"The money is gone," explained CAO Little.

"This really surprises me. I didn't realize that it could go on for so long," Strickland stated.

Strickland says the council is looking into ways to save money and time.

"That's something that we ought to look at in the new fiscal year is how do we tighten up these regulations," Strickland said.

For every officer awaiting their day in court, there's one less out there protecting the public.

Cornelius Monger's attorney Ted Hansom says he can't say much about Monger's case, only that there are no plea negotiations in progress.

The FBI cannot comment on their investigation into MPD officer Dennis Toll.

It often takes months for a police officer relieved of duty to get an administrative hearing because of a backlog of cases.

Memphis City Council is looking at reducing the number of civil service volunteers that must be present to hear each case.

Council members say it could put officers back on the street more quickly and save taxpayer dollars.

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