



Teen Wins \$45,000 Settlement After NYPD Cop Arrests Her For Rebuffing Sexual Advances

The teen's lawsuit is just one of many accusations of sexual misconduct leveled against NYPD officers by the public and other members of the force.

By *MintPress News Desk* |

June 4, 2015

MINNEAPOLIS — On Tuesday, the city of New York agreed to pay a \$45,000 settlement in a case in which a teenage girl accused an NYPD plainclothes officer of wrongfully arresting her after she rebuffed his advances.

The incident, which took place in November 2013, began when Officer José Peinan commented that his camouflage pants matched the camouflage hat of Natalie Erlich, who was 17 years old at the time.

“I brushed him off and I laughed,” Erlich told [the New York Post](#).

But Peinan continued to follow and flirt with her. The Post reported:

“When Erlich asked if he was a cop, he replied, ‘Maybe.’ She then told him that’s ‘a cop answer.’

Seconds later, a van pulled up and four more officers got out. That’s when Peinan ordered them to cuff her, she claimed.”

Erlich and her friend, Marie Gonzalez, were searched and arrested. Peinan accused Erlich of blowing his cover, but also angrily blamed her for “being a smartass.”

In her suit, Erlich also accused another male officer of inappropriately touching her breasts during a search that same day. Erlich and Gonzalez spent the night in jail, but charges were later dropped.

According to the Post, this is the fourth lawsuit involving Peinan that the city has been forced to settle.

Sexual misconduct a problem in the NYPD

Other lawsuits suggest that sexual misconduct is an ongoing problem for the NYPD, not just among officer interactions with the public but internally as well. The New York Daily News reported in November that [three female NYPD officers accused a male lieutenant of routine sexual harassment](#).

Court documents state:

“Many times, plaintiffs have screamed at [Lt. Alexander] Rojas to stop, particularly when he touched them in the most intimate areas of their bodies. However ... Rojas has refused to stop his unrelenting harassment.”

The plaintiffs alleged that Rojas would retaliate by changing their schedules and work assignments when they rebuffed his advances.

Then, in March, the [NYC paid \\$110,000 to Officer Jazmia Inzerillo](#) after she accused Lt. Jason Margolis of sexual harassment. She accused the lieutenant of “massaging her shoulders, making inappropriate inquiries about her personal life and bragging about his ties to police brass because he was then the president of the Shomrim Society of Jewish police officers.” When Inzerillo filed a complaint, the NYPD retaliated by sending her to “a department shrink and for alcohol treatment.”

In addition to the \$110,000 Inzerillo will receive from NYPD, she’ll receive \$2,500 from Margolis himself, per the terms of the settlement agreement.

Yet the problem may be even worse, and more pervasive, than these lawsuits and settlements indicate. Candice Bernd wrote last July about [the epidemic of sexual assault by police](#), and reported that police often choose victims who lack credibility in the knowledge it will help them get away with their crimes. Like [other forms of police violence](#), few accurate statistics are kept about the problem, but the available data is disturbing:

“An unofficial study by an arm of the Cato Institute, the [National Police Misconduct Reporting Project](#), recorded the [number of cases](#) involving sexual misconduct by cops. It found that 9.3 percent of all civilian complaints on police involved sexual misconduct, the second most common form of misconduct behind only excessive use of force. The organization counted 354 of the 618

officers under investigation for sexual offenses involved nonconsensual sexual acts, and 51 percent, or 180, of these 354 acts involved minors.”