



DC Police Department on hiring standards after cops arrested

By: Mola Lenghi – December 6, 2013

Police departments and their officers wield an enormous amount of power and trust. That's why it's important to hire responsible and capable officers who have high ethical standards.

But some suggest, DC police are not always doing that.

DC officers, from detectives to beat cops are committing crimes in shocking numbers.

"Well, it's an indication of a serious problem," said Tim Lynch of the Cato Institute project that monitors police departments across the country.

A recent Washington Examiner report highlights the more than 90 arrests of DC officers in the last three-and-a-half years. Just this week, two more were arrested.

DC Police Chief Cathy Lanier described what the department does when they arrest one of their own.

"We go back and look at, did we miss something in the recruiting process, in the hiring process, in the background process. Did we hire the right people? Because that's our concern: are we hiring the right people, are we screening out things that we should be?" said Lanier.

The Chief added that the hiring and recruiting process has changed drastically in the last six years.

"It is a 360 degree process for hiring, a different standard," she said.

Today, basic requirements for becoming a cop include polygraph tests, background checks that consider criminal history, as well as psychological and mental evaluations.

Officers also have to "possess a high moral character for carrying out law enforcement duties," according to the section of the DC Police website that discusses hiring requirements.

But some police union reps argue that current hiring guidelines and standards are not where they should be and that the department needs to be more vigilant about hiring good cops.

Lynch said that it's about having a system in place.

"You have to take a look at whether you have a bad apple or a bad system in place," said Lynch.

"Sometimes police departments around the country have a reactive system - they wait for a lawsuit to be filed or they wait for an officer to be arrested."

Lanier insists her department has that system.

"We put very strong policies in place, we put a lot of opportunities for people to report misconduct to us and we do proactive integrity tests," she said.

Adding that, in the case of the DC Police Department, the arrests have just a few bad apples.

"I've had three cops shot in the line of duty this year protecting strangers. That's what 99.9% of my police department does every single day," said Lanier.