

The Times-Picayune

Second to police brutality are complaints of sexual abuse

Jarvis DeBerry

November 2, 2015

An Oklahoma City (Okla.) police officer was scheduled to stand trial Monday on allegations that he preyed upon 13 women in his jurisdiction, forcing them to perform oral sex on him while threatening them with his gun and his badge.

In advance of Danile Holtzclaw's trial, the Associated Press looked at police disciplinary records across the country and found that between 2009 and 2014, "some 550 officers were decertified for sexual assault, including rape and sodomy, sexual shakedowns in which citizens were extorted into performing favors to avoid arrest, or gratuitous pat-downs. Some 440 officers lost their badges for other sex offenses, such as possessing child pornography, or for sexual misconduct that included being a peeping Tom, sexting juveniles or having on-duty intercourse."

The story suggests that the problem is "unquestionably" worse than the numbers suggests because the AP is only counting those officers who had their licenses revoked "and not all states take such action." Two of our most populated states, California and New York, don't have a state system to decertify officers. In addition to that, there have been media reports of officers being removed for sexual misconduct, the AP reports, but those states where the officers worked provided no records of that disciplinary action.

The AP report cites two Cato Institute reports that say allegations of sexual misconduct by the police are second only to allegations of excessive force.

That AP story also mentions a 2007 meeting of 70 police chiefs from around the country. When they were asked if they had had an officer accused of sexual misconduct, almost every chief indicated yes.

We've had cases in this area for sure.

In 2001 former New Orleans police officer George Lee III was sentenced to 30 years for five counts of forcible rape and three counts of second-degree kidnapping.

Since then we've had a New Orleans officer booked with threatening a woman if she didn't have sex with him, a New Orleans officer booked with using his service pistol to demand oral sex and a New Orleans officer booked with pulling over a bicyclist and raping her. The week the

bicyclist said she was raped, a Slidell officer was booked with the online solicitation of an undercover investigator posing as a 13-year-old girl.

In 2007 a state grand jury accused a New Orleans officer of threatening to arrest two women if they didn't have sex with him. The women were undercover Jefferson Parish sheriff's deputies posing as prostitutes. They were set out as bait because other prostitutes had complained that the officer forced them into sex with threats of arrest.

In 2011 an Orleans Parish jury convicted Henry Hollins of the New Orleans Police Department of attempted aggravated rape and second-degree kidnapping. Prosecutors said Hollins drove around a police cruiser that had three dildos, sexual enhancement products and used condoms. Though he was only convicted of attempting to rape the woman, the woman testified that he went all the way through with the act.

The same month Hollins was convicted, another New Orleans officer, Carey Dykes, was fired for taking a woman to a Tulane Avenue motel while he was on the clock. The AP story mentioned above counts sex on the job as sexual misconduct, too.

I doubt that's a comprehensive list of all the local offices who have been accused of or convicted of sexual misconduct, which makes it all the more disturbing. Readers are invited to remind me of additional cases in the comments section below.

The AP's report says that police who sexually prey upon the public tend to choose victims they're convinced won't be believable. A woman who says the Oklahoma City police officer forced her into sex has a history of drug addiction and imprisonment. She's poor. She was repeatedly raped by a family member when she was a little girl, she said and she says the police officer raping her is not the worst thing that's ever happened to her.

In many ways, she's a perfect victim. But still she stepped forward to say she was raped.