

By summer, 1,000 Miami-Dade cops may don body cameras

HIGHLIGHTS

Miami-Dade mayor details plans in forum with U.S. attorney general

Gimenez: Rollout, among largest in U.S., would show what officers 'do right'

A settlement between the city of Miami and Justice should go to a vote next month



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Attorney General Loretta Lynch arrives at the Black Police Precinct and Courthouse Museum in Overtown on Friday. At left is her husband Stephen Hargrove and leading the tour, at right, is retired Miami Police Lieutenant Archie McKay. **AL DIAZ** - adiaz@miamiherald.com

BY DAVID SMILEY
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The mayors of Miami and Miami-Dade County told U.S. Attorney General Loretta Lynch on Friday that they're making strides to ensure trust in local police: Miami Mayor Tomás Regalado by finalizing a police settlement with the Department of Justice, and Miami-Dade Mayor Carlos Gimenez by continuing a plan to equip most of the county police department with body cameras.

During a community policing forum at Miami Dade College's Wolfson campus, Gimenez said he plans to send 1,000 body cameras into the field this summer, marking one of the largest police camera roll-outs in the country. The county received a \$1 million grant from Lynch's Department of Justice in September to help pay for 500 cameras. Next week, Gimenez will ask county commissioners to approve a 5-year, \$5.5 million agreement with vendor Viewu for wireless cameras and the necessary software and services to store and manage sensitive video.

"I think we'll be the largest department in the United States to have most if not all our patrol officers wearing body cameras by the end of the summer," said Gimenez, whose effort to record officer interactions has met resistance from the county police union. "A lot of people want to see what police officers do wrong. I want to see what police officers do right."

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I THINK WE'LL BE THE LARGEST DEPARTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES TO HAVE MOST IF NOT ALL OUR PATROL OFFICERS WEARING BODY CAMERAS BY THE END OF THE SUMMER

Miami-Dade Mayor Carlos Gimenez

Body cameras have become a symbol and tool of police accountability throughout the U.S. in recent years as tensions have erupted in cities such as Baltimore and Ferguson, Missouri. Lynch traveled to South Florida this week to recognize what she said were exemplary efforts in bridging trust through community policing and data collection. And in a move that might have seemed unthinkable not long ago, she included Miami police in her visit.

In 2013, the Justice Department slammed Miami's 1,300-member department following a review of more than 30 police-involved shootings that showed the department had violated constitutional rights by engaging in a pattern of using "excessive force" when it came to pulling the trigger. Federal authorities required that a series of reforms be cemented through a consent decree.

The two sides remained at odds for more than two years, and at times frustrations boiled over. Last year, it seemed like the city and federal authorities might be headed for litigation when Justice attorneys accused Miami's lawyers of ignoring them.

But ahead of Lynch's visit, Justice and the city were able to hash out an agreement that, while not yet public, is expected to go before Miami city commissioners next month. The settlement is expected to last three years and include a requirement that an independent person monitor the city's progress — one of the sticking points that delayed an agreement for so long.

On Friday, Wifredo Ferrer, the U.S. attorney for the Southern District of Florida, praised Miami police for having already implemented a number of reforms to be memorialized by the

settlement. He noted that the city last year brought in the Florida Department of Law Enforcement to investigate the department's police-involved shootings, recently reorganized tactical police operations, and created a high liability incident review board for incidents that didn't result in "deadly force," but that did involve car chases or SWAT deployments.

"That agreement, which will be voted on soon by the city commission, has a lot of very wonderful initiatives and strategies to improve our relationship to make sure that not only are we effective in our jobs but that we gain that bond and that very special relationship with our community," said Ferrer.

Regalado said that Miami's police have done much to improve community relationships since Justice came to town. But he said having the agreement in place will cement those changes in the eyes of the public.

"Since you came in, the police department of course changed ways," he told Lynch. He said that police "have implemented almost 100 percent of what was recommended. Now the final thing is the ink on the document."

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THE FINAL THING IS THE INK ON THE DOCUMENT MIAMI MAYOR TOMÁS REGALADO

Lynch also visited on Friday Booker T Washington Senior High in Overtown, where student "peace ambassadors" who have partnered with the U.S. attorney's office talked about how social media shape their view of police, and how sometimes they're reticent to trust officers. Lynch later visited the Freedom Tower and the Overtown black precinct. She praised South Florida's police on Friday for embracing new initiatives to improve trust between the police and the public.

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“I’ve seen law enforcement take great strides to be responsive, to be proactive, and most important of all to be protective,” Lynch said.

Lynch leaves South Florida on Friday. She will continue on to Fayetteville, Los Angeles, Portland, Phoenix and Indianapolis.

Miami Herald staff writer Jay Weaver and WLRN News reporter Nadege Green contributed to this report.

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