

DR. ROBERT A. VERRY

Chief of Police[^]

Licensed Private Detective, License No.9629

Certificated Freelance Paralegal

Post Office Box 47 | SBB | NJ | 08880-0047

732.302.9520

DrVerry@Verry-Shea.com | www.VerryShea.com

CONCENTRATION



Disciplinary Hearing Officer

Grievances | Unfair Practice

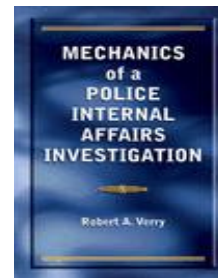
Internal Affairs | Harassment | Workplace Investigator

Robert is **not** a lawyer. If you need legal advice, please contact a lawyer. (^-Retired SBB-NJ)

Internal Affairs Professional Standards/Guidelines

Employee Misconduct | Employee Discipline

OPRA | Common Law (Internal Affairs/Police Records)



Police Officers Allege Internal Affairs and Misconduct Investigations Are Being “Weaponized” Against Them: Are They Right?

Having spent more than 30 years as an internal affairs investigator and nearly a decade as chief, I can confidently say that I was never accused and never used the internal affairs process to target officers in my own agency—or in any of the agencies where I consulted, served as an impartial hearing officer, or acted as an outside investigator. At the same time, and not limited to New Jersey, I am aware of governing officials who inappropriately manipulated the system to target individuals in their police departments who, for example, did not support their political agenda. In one instance, after the chief exposed the criminal actions of a corrupt government official, members of the corrupt official’s majority party immediately started to allege false accusations against the chief, filed unsustainable false allegations, dissected his every movement, contractual obligations, and decisions, and stripped away his budget, which ultimately pushed the chief into retirement.

In fact, there’s a growing chorus of police officers across the United States alleging that governing officials, police chiefs, and internal affairs investigators are weaponizing misconduct investigations as tools of retaliation and intimidation rather than mechanisms for accountability. These allegations suggest a troubling pattern where disciplinary processes, traditionally designed to ensure professional standards and public trust, are being manipulated to silence officers who report wrongdoing, challenge leadership decisions, or fall out of favor with command staff. Recent high-profile cases illuminate this trend. In Baltimore, former prosecutors filed a lawsuit on behalf of police officers claiming that senior command staff “weaponized the investigative and disciplinary powers” against officers (<https://tinyurl.com/25cj7hxx>). New Jersey’s attorney general ordered a comprehensive overhaul of the State Police’s internal affairs unit after investigations revealed that disciplinary inquiries had been “weaponized” against certain troopers (<https://tinyurl.com/2xn5znfx>). A study of the Wethersfield Police Department found that the internal affairs process was weaponized under former leadership, with 85% of officers reporting that disciplinary actions were applied unfairly (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3bj2ciEUzMU>).

The allegations extend beyond isolated incidents, suggesting systemic abuse of oversight mechanisms. Officers describe facing increased scrutiny, false allegations, transfers to less desirable assignments, and even termination after reporting misconduct or challenging superiors. In New York, four former NYPD chiefs have filed lawsuits alleging corruption and retaliation within the department, claiming they faced punishment after speaking up about misconduct (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0r_DWbtxdhg). These cases reveal how the very systems

designed to maintain police integrity may themselves become instruments of internal suppression, creating a chilling effect that undermines legitimate accountability efforts and perpetuates a culture where misconduct can flourish unchecked.

As noted above, government officials sometimes manipulate investigative and disciplinary procedures not only against lower-level officers, but also to remove rank and file officers, chiefs, and directors who no longer align with their political agenda. While it's undeniable that these processes can, in some cases, be weaponized, the majority of chiefs, governing officials, and internal affairs investigators act with integrity and fairness. They are committed to treating all individuals impartially and conducting investigations thoroughly and objectively, without allowing personal biases or outside influences to interfere. Using the internal affairs process as a weapon happens, and while I'd like to present studies that the weaponization of the internal affairs process to target innocent officers is isolated, unfortunately, the available research provides insufficient evidence to support the claim that wrongful internal affairs investigations of innocent police officers are . Key limitations include:

- Absence of systematic data collection on wrongful internal investigations
- No comprehensive studies examining false accusation rates against police officers
- Limited research on due process protections for officers under investigation
- Lack of independent oversight mechanisms tracking investigation outcomes

While the research documents concern about procedural fairness, officer distrust of internal affairs processes, and potential bias in investigations, these findings do not provide clear evidence that wrongful investigations are either isolated or widespread.

The research gap itself is significant - the lack of systematic study on this issue prevents any definitive conclusions about the frequency or distribution of wrongful internal affairs investigations. Without comprehensive data on investigation outcomes, appeal rates, exoneration statistics, or comparative analysis with other investigative processes, it is impossible to determine whether wrongful investigations represent isolated incidents or more systemic problems.

To properly assess this issue, future research would need to include systematic data collection on internal affairs outcomes, longitudinal studies of investigation processes, independent oversight mechanisms, and comparative analysis with other investigative systems. Until such research is conducted, claims about the isolated nature of wrongful internal affairs investigations remain unsupported by empirical evidence.

Two Relevant Studies

From research I co-authored, we discovered that over 100 police officers from various New Jersey departments found significant variability in how officers perceive internal affairs processes. The study revealed that “police officers vary in their perceptions of IA processes, such as the fairness of IA processes” and noted concerning levels of “distrust in IA processes, potentially hampering its effectiveness.” This suggests that officers themselves question the fairness of internal investigations, though this does not directly prove wrongful investigations of innocent officers (<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/07340168241271213>). Contradictorily, while the study shows there's distrust from within their departments in the

internal affairs process, “under no circumstances may a law enforcement agency’s internal affair’s investigatory function be contracted or delegated to a private entity (Guidelines, August 2020, p. 17, § 4.2.7).

Another study found of 1,195 police officers examined their willingness to cooperate with internal affairs units and found that officer compliance was significantly influenced by “perceived procedural justice” and “legitimacy” of the internal affairs process. The research indicated that when officers perceive internal affairs processes as unfair or illegitimate, their cooperation decreases substantially, which could indicate concerns about wrongful investigations (<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10439463.2021.1879073>).

Summary

The article examines growing concerns among law enforcement officers that internal affairs and misconduct investigations are being “weaponized” by government officials, chiefs, and internal affairs investigators as tools of retaliation, intimidation, or political maneuvering rather than accountability. Several cases across the United States—including in Baltimore, New Jersey, Wethersfield, and New York—illustrate how disciplinary processes, intended to uphold professional standards and public trust, may instead be manipulated to target officers who expose misconduct, dissent from leadership, or refuse to align with political agendas.

The article highlights systemic patterns in which officers face false allegations, increased scrutiny, undesirable transfers, or termination after reporting wrongdoing. Such practices erode trust in internal affairs processes and undermine their legitimacy. Although many chiefs and investigators act with integrity, research reveals significant officer distrust in internal affairs systems and concern over procedural fairness.

Critically, the article emphasizes the research gap: there is insufficient systematic evidence to determine whether wrongful investigations are isolated incidents or widespread. Studies show variability in officer perceptions of fairness, with cooperation declining when IA processes are perceived as illegitimate. However, there is no comprehensive data collection on false accusations, due process protections, or investigation outcomes.

Conclusion

While credible concerns exist about the misuse of internal affairs processes, the absence of robust, systematic research prevents definitive conclusions about whether wrongful investigations are isolated or systemic. What is clear, however, is that distrust in internal affairs undermines both officer morale and accountability mechanisms. Moving forward, comprehensive studies, independent oversight, and stronger procedural safeguards are essential to restore legitimacy and ensure that internal affairs processes serve their intended role—protecting public trust and holding officers accountable—without being distorted into tools of political or organizational retaliation.

The bottom line is that the police officers could be innocently targeted, but the research reveals very limited evidence to support the claim. The available data suggests that while such

investigations may occur, there is insufficient systematic research to determine whether these cases represent isolated incidents or more widespread patterns.

See <https://verryshea.com/about1> for Bob's brief Bio.