

2010 Report to The Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement on the Conduct of the Atlanta Police Department

Presented by Copwatch of East Atlanta

<http://www.copwatchoea.org>

ABOUT US

Copwatch of East Atlanta is a civilian organization which monitors police interactions with the public. We record video of officers in situations such as traffic stops, foot patrols, road blocks, protests and large events. We have compiled this report to highlight areas where we have documented APD officers failing to uphold the standards the public expects of them.

HOSTILITY TOWARDS OVERSIGHT

There is a consistent pattern of APD officers seeking to prevent civilians from observing police activity in public. Although Copwatch of East Atlanta has a clear policy of non-interference and a well-established legal right to observe, our members are routinely told to stop filming police. Members have been threatened with arrest, and in one case even had their camera illegally seized by APD officers in retaliation for filming the officers in public.

Example cases:

January 16 2010 - APD officers are conducting an arrest. An officer orders Copwatch not to take his picture, and then physically shoves the observer to prevent further documentation of the arrest. Full report available at: <http://www.copwatchoea.org/content/two-arrests-edgewood>

March 11 2010 - An officer involved in a traffic stop tells observers that they are not allowed to film, and when they continue to film he orders them to leave. Full report: <http://www.copwatchoea.org/content/north-ave-traffic-stop>

April 22 2010 - APD narcotics officers unlawfully assault a Copwatch member in order to seize the camera that was being used to record the officers. Full report: <http://www.copwatchoea.org/content/apd-seizes-camera-tries-suppress-footage-raid>

May 1, 2010 - Copwatch members in a car that is pulled over are asked not to film, and when they do

not comply, the officer reaches in the window and attempts to grab the camera.

REFUSAL TO IDENTIFY

APD regulations dictate that officers must provide their name and assignment number to any civilian upon request. We have repeatedly encountered officers who refuse to identify themselves. This violation creates real difficulties for civilians who may want to report a particular officer's misconduct.

Example cases:

March 10, 2010 - Copwatch was documenting the arrest of a suspect at the West End Mall. Officers from APD (including one officer from the REDDOG Unit) were repeatedly asked to identify themselves and refused to do so. The officer from the REDDOG unit can be heard on video saying "I don't have to identify myself".

May 20, 2010 - Officer Rodriguez was performing what appeared to be a random ID check of a group of day laborers. Rodriguez refused to identify himself but Copwatch observers were able to read his last name from his nametag. Another officer arrived and also refused requests for identification. A female officer driving APD vehicle Number 30208 also ignored a request for identification.

July 9, 2010 - Two APD officers conducting a roadblock refused to identify themselves to Copwatch observers. The male officer, when asked "Are you refusing to identify yourself?" explicitly indicated "Yep". When the female officer was asked to identify herself, she turned her head and walked away without acknowledging the request. Full report: <http://www.copwatchoea.org/content/apd-officers-refuse-identify-themselves-while-conducting-roadblock>

LIMITATIONS

This report is far from comprehensive, and should be considered a reflection of our direct experience with the APD only. In fact, there have been many other recent instances of police misconduct and non-transparency which we were not able to document directly. Most notably these include the REDDOG raid on the Atlanta Eagle nightclub, the arrest of a woman in southwest Atlanta for photographing officers outside her home, and the arrest of another woman for asking "Why" she could not stand on the sidewalk. Because of our limited resources, we cannot even begin to document a significant percentage of APD's activity throughout the city, and so we have likely overlooked many more important instances of misconduct.