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“Protecting and Supporting Law Enforcement”



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DATE: January 15, 2026.

TO: NPDF Members & Supporters
 Police Association Presidents

FROM: Sgt. Michael P. Barry (Ret.)
 Vice President
 National Police Defense Foundation

SUBJECT: Yonkers Det. Sgt. Hector Cartagena
 Legal Defense Fund



PLIGHT OF YONKERS DET. SGT. HECTOR CARTAGENA

The National Police Defense Foundation (NPDF), a congressionally recognized and IRS designated non-profit organization, would like to bring to your attention the plight of Yonkers Police Det. Sgt. Hector Cartagena who was acquitted by the court for allegedly using excessive force on a suspect. An NPDF investigation disclosed disturbing evidence that Det. Sgt. Cartagena was selectively prosecuted in retribution for not endorsing the Yonkers Mayor for re-election. Despite being acquitted of criminal charges, Det. Sgt. Cartagena was nevertheless terminated without a due process hearing.

BACKGROUND ON YONKERS DET. SGT. HECTOR CARTAGENA

On March 14, 2024, Yonkers Police Department officers pursued a suspect driving a stolen motor vehicle through city streets, during which the suspect caused several collisions with police vehicles, injured several officers, drove recklessly and endangered the public at large. These officers followed department procedures and protocol to keep the community safe while attempting to apprehend the suspect.

Physical force had to be used to apprehend the suspect, who violently resisted arrest. Upon taking the suspect into custody, an investigation into the use of force was launched, as was appropriate. The Yonkers Police Internal Affairs Division responded and reviewed the actions taken by the officers. Without the benefit of a full investigation, the Police Commissioner consulted the Mayor and determined that the actions of one member of the department, Detective Sergeant Hector Cartagena, allegedly utilized force inconsistent with training. The very next morning, the Yonkers Police Department referred the case to the Westchester County District Attorney's Office. This was unprecedented in the history of Yonkers—rushing to judgment without any consideration for the horror and injuries Det. Sgt. Cartagena himself endured that night at the hands of the suspect during the chase. That unprecedented referral resulted in the filing of criminal charges against Detective Sergeant Hector Cartagena, who was charged with Assault 2nd degree, Attempted Assault 2nd degree, and Assault 3rd degree.

At trial, renowned criminal defense attorney Joe Tacopina represented Det. Sgt. Cartagena. Tacopina argued that Det. Sgt. Cartagena was a 27 year veteran officer with an impeccable, unblemished career who used reasonable force within department guidelines. Toxicology reports showed that the suspect was on several illegal drugs that night, so much so, that he continued to violently resist arrest even after other officers on the scene tased him multiple times. Based on all the evidence presented by Tacopina during the trial, he proved that Det. Cartagena had acted well within the Yonkers PD's use of force guidelines. After a full trial, Det. Sgt. Cartagena was found NOT GUILTY and acquitted of ALL COUNTS.

One glaring theme became obvious during this ordeal that explained the Mayors rush to judgment in referring this to the Westchester County DA's office for indictment. Just a few months before this incident, the Yonkers Mayor was facing a tough re-election and had solicited the support of many local fraternal groups, including the Hispanic Officers Association, which Det. Cartagena was president of at the time. The Association is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization. As such, the Association is prohibited from actively engaging in any political activity. Although previous heads of the Association had endorsed

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

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The NPDF is an IRS 501(c)(3) non-profit foundation that funds the "Safe Cop" and "Operation Kids" Programs.



the Mayor in years prior, Det. Sgt. Cartagena chose to abide by the rules governing tax exemption and refrained from endorsing any mayoral candidate that year.

It appeared that this did not sit well with the Mayor. On the night of the chase, March 14, 2024, when the Commissioner brought the matter to the Mayor, he urged the Commissioner, without hesitation to send the case to the District Attorney the very next morning. A move unheard of in the past. Within a few days, the Mayor and Commissioner published a press release not to condemn the suspect who stole the car and injured multiple officers during the pursuit, but to condemn Det. Sgt. Cartagena for allegedly using the necessary force to take a violently resisting suspect into custody. Never in the history of the Yonkers Police Department had the Mayor and Commissioner been so quick to condemn an experienced career police supervisor without giving him or her the benefit of the doubt.

The Mayor has been in office for a record four full terms (16 years) and has always stood by his officers, emphasizing that all officers are entitled to the same presumption of innocence as any citizen. Yet in this instance, he publicly declared Det. Sgt. Cartagena guilty before any due process was afforded. Det. Sgt. Cartagena patiently waited for his day in court to prove his innocence and clear his name.

However, the situation only got worse. After a tense trial where all the facts and evidence were on full display, after the same video footage of the arrest that the Mayor saw was played frame by frame multiple times in court, the court handed down a NOT GUILTY ON ALL COUNTS verdict. But no sooner had Det. Sgt. Cartagena been acquitted the Mayor again took to the news media to condemn the not guilty verdict.

If that was not enough, the Mayor then took to Facebook to further disparage and defame Det. Sgt. Cartagena. In a long-winded post, he mischaracterized the incident, publicly questioned the legitimacy of the court's "not guilty" verdict, and declared, without basis that Det. Sgt. Cartagena would "never wear the uniform again," despite the court's full acquittal on all charges.

The Mayor effectively supplanted the court's well-informed judgment with his own biased and politicized condemnation, using his public platform to damage Det. Sgt. Cartagena's reputation and justify the City's rushed decision to terminate him before the trial even began and without the required administrative hearing. This prejudgment was recently reversed by an arbitrator who is now presiding over a departmental arbitration. The Mayor has also refused to grant Det. Sgt. Cartagena back pay or medical coverage, despite his acquittal at trial and despite a previous arbitration ruling that the City violated GML 207-c provisions when it denied Det. Sgt. Cartagena benefits after his line-of-duty injuries.

The National Police Defense Foundation (NPDF) has taken up the cause of Det. Sgt. Cartagena to fight for his job back and to be fully reinstated with back pay and medical benefits. The NPDF Executive Board has taken the lead in creating the "Det. Sgt. Hector Cartagena Legal Defense Fund" to help him amass the staggering amount of funds needed to resist the Mayor's relentless attempts to railroad him even further by firing him and denying him his hard earned pension and medical benefits simply because Hector refused to endorse the Mayor's re-election campaign.

The Mayor should have known that an IRS-designated 501(c)(3) organization like the "Hispanic Officers Association" is obligated to protect its tax-exempt status at all costs, and that means remaining outside of the political arena, even if that decision is not politically popular with the Mayor. Furthermore, it is only by standing up to political bullies in the legal arena that our law enforcement officers can feel confident to do their jobs knowing that we have their backs if political ideologues seek to make examples of them by denying them their due-process rights.

NPDF ESTABLISHES LEGAL DEFENSE FUND

The NPDF urges all its members and supporters to make a tax-deductible donation to "Det. Sgt. Cartagena Legal Defense Fund" Please call 888-SAFE COP to make your tax-deductible donation or on-line at www.npdf.org or by mailing it to the NPDF headquarters located at 21 Kilmer Drive, Bldg. 2-Suite C, Morganville, New Jersey 07751. Major credit cards are accepted.

Fraternally,

Sgt. Michael P. Barry

Sgt. Michael P. Barry (Ret.)
Vice-President



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