



this issue:

Gil Kerlikowske, Nominee for Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy (Drug Czar)

Kerlikowske's Background

Chief of Police, Seattle, WA

Deputy Director, Community Oriented Policing Service, USDOJ

Police Commissioner, Buffalo, NY

Chief of Police, Fort Pierce, FL

Chief of Police, Port St. Lucie, FL

Police Officer, St. Petersburg, FL

Army, 1970-1972

EDUCATION

B. A. in Criminal Justice, University of South Florida

M.A. in Criminal Justice, University of South Florida

Graduate of National Executive Institute at the FBI Academy

Who is Gil Kerlikowske?

On March 16 President Obama nominated Gil Kerlikowske as Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy.

In 2002, he ordered his police officers to stand idly by during the Seattle Mardi Gras riots, in which a young man named Kris Kime was killed and 70

others injured. Kime's family sued the city and was awarded almost \$2,000,000. Later that year, nearly 90% of the Seattle Police Officers' Guild voted no confidence in Kerlikowske. This was not the first time that a union had voted no confidence in its police chief: the Port St. Lucie police union also held a no confidence vote in him. Kerlikowske then went to Buffalo, NY and clashed with the police union there. In June of 2008 it was reported that the city of Seattle had spent more than \$400,000 settling police misconduct cases since January of the previous year, and paid more than \$6,000,000 in legal fees to the firm Stafford Frey Cooper for representation in these cases. Fn. 1

“ Police officers are sworn to do a duty, and they want to do that. When they're held back, they're not able to do what they got into the job to do. ”

Mike Edwards, Seattle Police Guild President

As Seattle Police Chief, Kerlikowske has willingly gone along with methadone vans, free needle exchanges, medical marijuana, making marijuana possession the lowest priority of law

enforcement. Every year during Hempfest tens of thousands of drug users gather and publicly smoke marijuana. Seattle police patrol the event, but they don't arrest the smokers. Alison Holcomb, drug policy director

for the ACLU of Washington said, "Police officers patrolling [Hempfest] are courteous and respectful." Fn. 2

During his tenure in Buffalo, there was a spike in the use of pepper spray by Buffalo police officers. This use of pepper spray resulted in civil rights protests, lawsuits, and an investigation by the Justice Department. The end result of this investigation was 6 years of federal oversight for the Buffalo Police Department.

In 2007, the NAACP, as well as the Minorities Executive Director Commission, called for Kerlikowske's resignation because of the way he handled allegations of police misconduct. Fn.3

Sources for further reading:

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Chief stands by standby tactic, Seattle Times, March 2, 2001. Available online at: <http://community.seattletimes.nwsourc.com/archive/?date=20010302&slug=mardigras02m>.
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More information you really need to know about Gil Kerlikowske

Fn. 1

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- "Czar Struck: Obama's Brilliant Pick for Drug Czar," *The Stranger*. Available online at: http://slog.thestranger.com/slog/archives/2009/02/11/czar_struck_obama_s_brillia. (Accessed on April 2, 2009.)
- "Gil Kerlikowske: Obama's New Drug Czar," *Time*. Available online at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/16/us/politics/16czar.html>. (Accessed on April 2, 2009.)

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- "Police chief blasted by review board: Overhaul of system that let officers off hook demanded of Kerlikowske," *SeattlePi.com*. Available online at: http://www.seattlepi.com/local/322084_police03.html. (Accessed April 1, 2009.)

See Also: *Office of Professional Accountability Review Board, 2007 Mid-Year Report*, Seattle City Council, July 2, 2007. Available online at: http://www.seattle.gov/council/OPARB/reports/2007midyear_report.pdf. (Accessed April 10, 2009.)

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