

# LEGAL NEWS

## City settles suit over 'rogue' police team

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The **Baltimore Police Department** has settled a federal civil rights lawsuit brought by 17 people who accused the East Side Special Enforcement Team of "rogue" police work, including unjustified searches and arrests, between fall 2005 and spring 2006.

The settlement, the terms of which have not yet been disclosed, was reached last week, according to court filings. U.S. District Judge William D. Quarles Jr. dismissed the case on Friday but permitted either party to resume the litigation if settlement is not "consummated" within 60 days. Generally, such a window allows for the city's **Board of Estimates**, which

won't meet again until Nov. 18, to approve a settlement payment.

"Ms. Needleman and I are satisfied with the agreement and feel that the city acted fairly and graciously throughout the negotiation process," said **Matthew E. Bennett** on behalf of his co-counsel for the plaintiffs, Christie P. Needleman.

City Solicitor George A. Nilson declined to comment on the case. Other lawyers representing the police department or individual defendant officers referred calls to Nilson or did not return messages.

In their March 2008 suit, the plaintiffs, mostly city or county residents, alleged the Special Enforcement Team's 'B' squad made arrests without good cause, executed illegal searches and seizures of the detainees' homes

and filed charges that did not result in convictions.

At the time the suit was filed, Needleman conceded many of her clients had drugs when they were stopped, but said "the ends don't justify the means."

The unit was disbanded before suit

was filed, Needleman said.

Discovery disputes had plagued the case over the past year and a half. Trial in the case was expected to last three or four days per alleged incident (two of the seven encounters involved multiple plaintiffs), or three to four weeks.