

# Feds find no violation at Stratford

Justice Dept. ends probe of drug raid at high school

**BY TONY BARTELME**

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The U.S. Justice Department said Goose Creek police did not violate federal civil rights laws in last year's drug sweep at Stratford High School.

In a letter to Goose Creek Police Chief Harvey Becker, a Justice Department official said "the evidence does not establish a prosecutable violation" of federal civil rights laws, and that "accordingly, we have closed our investigation."

"This is a great relief," said Andy Savage, a lawyer for officers in the sweep.

As far as anyone being charged with a crime, Savage said, "it's over."

"There was never any intent to do anything criminal," added Lionel Lofton, another attorney for the officers. "Our clients are glad to be getting back to what they do best, protect the people of Goose Creek."

The Justice Department's decision follows a similar one made last month by S.C. Attorney General Henry McMaster.

McMaster said that officers created a "dangerous tinderbox situation" when they rushed in-to the school with guns drawn, but that such tactics were not illegal.

More than 100 students were detained during the controversial raid last November, which spawned international headlines, lawsuits, community protests and the resignation of longtime Stratford Principal George C. McCrackin.

School and police cameras captured officers bursting into the school hallway and waving their guns at students. Police ordered students to the floor while an officer with a drug-sniffing dog searched backpacks and belongings.

No drugs or weapons were found during the sweep.

While state and federal officials found no criminal laws had been broken, several lawsuits allege that police and school officials violated students' constitutional rights.

Settlement negotiations concerning those lawsuits recently broke down.