

Chicago cop wins \$540K suit against sergeant accused of taunting him

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CHICAGO (Sun-Times Media Wire) - Retired Chicago Police Sgt. Lawrence C. Knasiak was twice commended by the city council for his "dedication, professionalism and personal sacrifice" during a nearly 30-year career with the department.

Apparently that sense of civic duty didn't extend to cops he supervised, including a Jewish officer Knasiak allegedly called a "bloodsucking parasite," the Sun-Times is reporting.

On Monday, a federal jury awarded \$540,000 to that officer, who was supervised by Knasiak in a Southwest Side police district from 2000 to 2007.

The officer, Detlef Sommerfield, sued the city and his former boss in 2008, accusing Knasiak of taunting him for years with anti-Semitic and racist remarks, according to a federal court complaint.

Sommerfield was called "F - - - - - Jew boy" by Knasiak, who also would greet him with a Nazi salute, according to the complaint. On several occasions, Knasiak showed a swastika logo to Sommerfield, a German Jew who lost relatives in the Holocaust.

And Knasiak allegedly compared Germans to African-Americans, using a derogatory slur before adding: "Couldn't get rid of them then, can't get rid of them now."

Knasiak, who relocated to Arkansas after he retired in 2007, could not be reached for comment Monday evening. A spokesman for the city's legal department said the city was dismissed from the suit in 2009 and would not have to pay the sum awarded Monday.

Calling Knasiak's conduct "outrageous," Sommerfield's lawyer, Joseph Longo, blasted the culture of the police department. He also criticized the city for taking a long time to act on several professional complaints filed against Knasiak, including one dating back to 2004.

Knasiak "was able to yell these remarks out in roll call with other sergeants and lieutenants and captains standing next to him," Longo said. "Not just once or twice, but regularly, and nobody tells him to stop. I don't understand that. It's baffling."