Chief shuffles top slots at SAPD


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Change shook the San Antonio Police Department on Friday as Chief William McManus moved three top officials who partly oversaw the implementation of a bungled multimillion-dollar computer system, and appointed a new assistant chief to head that division.

The moves come week before a long-awaited audit report about the system is released.

On the heels of the sudden retirement in August of Assistant Chief Jerry Pittman, the shakeup marks the biggest administrative change under McManus — who has been on the job for five months and is the first outsider to head the department in 20 years.

Pittman, who retired after a public scandal involving an incident at a Northeast Side motel room, headed the department's operations bureau, which oversees patrol, investigations and technical services.

Friday, McManus filled the vacancy by appointing Deputy Chief Rudy Gonzales to head the administrations bureau, which, among other things, oversees the department's problematic computer system.

McManus announced Gonzales' promotion at a news conference Friday, but made no mention of any of the other changes. The San Antonio Express-News confirmed them through an internal police memo and interviews with officials involved.

Assistant Chief Tyrone Powers, who has headed that division for four years and is considered the point man for the failed computer system, was moved to Pittman's old spot.
Informed of the move Friday morning, he said he told McManus during the same meeting that he planned to retire within the next two years.

Two other top officials who presided over the computer system, Deputy Chief Jeffrey Page, who headed the resource management division, and Mark Kozielski, the information services manager, also were transferred.

Page was moved to the support services division.

Kozielski, a civilian, announced his retirement Friday morning after 28 years with the department. A police spokesman said the retirement is effective immediately. Kozielski could not be located for comment.

Capt. William Smith, who headed the Central Substation, will temporarily replace Page to oversee the resource management division, over the computer system, a spokesman said.

A project to overhaul the department's computer system began in 1999 and has cost more than $13 million. Yet seven years later, the system still isn't working.

McManus ordered an audit of it soon after he took office and received a draft in early August. He has been preparing a response for city officials on how to address the problem, City Manager Sheryl Sculley said, and the final version of the audit should be complete next week.

The changes made Friday are to "improve the service delivery of the Police Department," Sculley said. "These are healthy changes that needed to be made to improve the efficiency of our service delivery and to offer fresh and new perspectives on the computer system."

Powers, who has been on the force for 33 years, said he's "looking forward to the change."

He acknowledged problems have plagued the overhauling of the computer system but said it's "just like any system."

In 1999, he secured funding for the project, he said, and in 2002, wrote the plan on how to implement it. Recently, however, he said he's been "relatively detached."

"I don't look to that as having been any kind of a problem," he said, when asked whether the failed computer overhaul was behind his move.
Instead, he saw his impending retirement as reason to get someone else trained on the job.

"If I turn around and retire, no one knows anything about that system," he said, referring to the post he relinquished. Administration is "a very difficult thing and it's time somebody else learned how to do those things."

Gonzales, who has been with the department for 32 years, said: "This promotion was a total surprise, in a sense. I didn't think it was going to happen so soon."

Asked whether it was curious that three officials intricately involved with the computer project all were transferred a week before the audit was due, he said, "now that you mention it, yes."

But, he said, Powers has been near retirement for years and McManus wanted someone to learn under him.

Powers "will be working with me" to lead the administration division, Gonzales said. "It's going to be a transition."

McManus "wanted to get someone in there now and get started, that he could learn the process and have Chief Powers there as a mentor, so to speak, while he's learning," said Deputy Chief Michael Burns, who will now have Powers as his boss.

One of two minorities among five deputy chiefs, Gonzales was picked for his leadership, McManus said at a news conference. "The ability to command, the ability to understand how to work with people, how to get people to follow you. And I noticed those as very prominent things that were displayed by Assistant Chief Gonzales."

Teddy Stewart, president of the San Antonio Police Officers' Association, rejected any notion that McManus chose Gonzales because of his race, in light of a recent legal dustup where McManus lost a reverse discrimination trial in Dayton, Ohio, where he was police chief from 2002 to 2004. Jurors found McManus unjustly fired an Anglo police major and replaced her with African-American men.

Also Friday, the only other minority among the deputy chiefs — Rose Mary Flamma — was moved to Gonzales' old spot heading technical services, a position she previously held from 2000 to 2002.

Some police officials, however, saw the changes as the first sign that McManus is doing a little bit of cleaning house.
"The places where he's putting Page, Tyrone (Powers,) and Flammia are places where they don't want to be," said one officer who has been with the department for 25 years. "My gut feeling is he just wants to get them to leave."

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Staff Writer Brian Chasnoff contributed to this report.