

UPDATE: Fired Police Chief Working to Get Back Job

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Teresa C. Chambers, who was fired last year as U.S. Park Police chief after publicly calling for more funding and personnel, is still trying to get her old job back.

Chambers said she is waiting for a federal board to complete its review of the Interior Department's decision to dismiss her after she complained in a newspaper interview that her agency was stretched too thin. She said that she had been forced to divert officers from such duties as patrolling parkways to watch over monuments.

If a U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board panel rules against her, Chambers said she plans to take her case to federal court. Chambers, the first woman and the first person from outside the National Park Service to head the department in its 214-year history, has said supervisors undermined her work and targeted her unfairly. She led the force from February 2002 until her suspension in December 2003.

"It's still early in our fight," she said Friday by telephone. "I'm still planning on going back."

The three-member panel initiated its review after Chambers contested a finding in October by a judge with the merit systems protection board. The judge said that Chambers had a track record of disobeying supervisors and that her actions were "inconsistent with the degree of trust required for her position."

Chambers, who was in law enforcement for 27 years, said she and her husband, Jeff, regularly update her Web site, www.honestchief.com, where readers can review documents and newspaper clippings related to her dismissal. One listing is called, "From Coronation to Crucifixion . . . The Incredible Saga of Teresa Chambers."

The National Park Service recently named Dwight E. Pettiford to head the 600-member Park Police force; he had been the acting chief. Chambers, meanwhile, said she hopes to return to her former post and address issues that are confronting the agency.

"There are fewer police officers in the Park Service than there were 16 months ago when I raised the problem," she said. "They're wearing thin."

-- Paul Schwartzman



Teresa C. Chambers was fired after she said in a newspaper interview that she had been forced to divert officers to watching monuments.