# CE OFFICE

# INGLEWOOD POLICE DEPARTMENT

# **NEWS RELEASE**

### CITY OF INGLEWOOD, CALIFORNIA

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## September 5, 2008

The Inglewood Police Department is responding aggressively to directives issued by the City Council calling for enhanced training for officers department wide, and will seek to expedite ongoing internal and independent reviews of Department policies, procedures and tactics, in the wake of recent officer-involved shootings.

In addition, seven officers and a field sergeant involved in a fatal confrontation Aug. 31 with a homeless man on South Market Street, will not be returned to patrol duties until they receive further supplemental training and are evaluated to the satisfaction of the Department and City Council. In the tragic incident, Eddie Felix Franco, 56, was stopped by police officers after reports from a local merchant that he had been seen with a chrome pistol tucked into his waistband. Based on preliminary investigation findings, Franco was ordered to place his hands above his head. However, Franco ultimately dropped his hands and appeared to officers to be reaching toward the weapon at his waist, resulting in officers firing as many as 47 shots.

A second person, a motorist driving by the scene, was grazed in the head by a bullet fired by police. The male adult received stitches, and was treated and released at a local hospital.

Officers involved in the Aug. 31 shooting and presently on administrative leave pending full reviews and supplemental training are:

- Officer Max Koffman, 17 years of experience
- Officer Loren Robinson, 10½ years of experience
- Officer John Baca, 8 years of experience
- Officer Caroline Amezcua, 5 years of experience
- Officer Christopher Anderson, 1 year of experience
- Officer Ryan Green, 1 year of experience
- Officer Zerai Massey, 5½ years of experience
- Sergeant Matt Hart, 20 years of experience

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None of the officers involved in the Aug. 31 incident were involved in the three earlier officer-involved shootings.

The Inglewood Police Department is mindful of and shares the community's concern over these shootings, events that have set in motion a series of cumulative reviews to make sure officers in the field are utilizing the best possible tactics and fully understand Department use-of-force policies. Parallel to this, we continue to review all aspects of the Aug. 31 shooting, focusing on how IPD officers were deployed after responding to the scene and what circumstances occurred after the officers encountered Franco and a second man in the 400 block of South Market Street.

While our investigation is in its preliminary stages at this time the following specific details have emerged to date:

Officers were dispatched to the area about 1:47 p.m. after receiving reports about a man with a gun. Officers encountered the homeless man, later identified as Franco, as well as the second man, both of whom were found standing near large carts filled with unknown materials. One cart had a pit bull tied to it.

In response to commands from police, the second man put his hands on his head, walked backwards toward the officers on scene and was detained without incident. For reasons that remain unclear, Franco failed to comply with the officers' orders to do likewise. After several minutes, and as officers deployed less lethal force to obtain his compliance, Franco abruptly dropped his hands, apparently reaching for what officers had reason to believe was a chrome handgun in his waistband. At this point, officers opened fire. The subsequent investigation revealed that the gun officers believed to be real was later determined to be a chrome-colored replica.

Franco was transported by ambulance to UCLA Medical Center in Westwood where he was pronounced dead. The pit bull terrier owned by the second man was wounded in the shooting and was taken to a local animal hospital where the dog was treated and survived.

At this time, there are four parallel but independent investigations underway:

- An internal IPD investigation is reviewing the circumstances surrounding the Aug. 31 officer-involved shooting.
- An internal administrative investigation is assessing the officers' actions in terms of department policies and procedures. That process precedes and must be completed before any formal determination on the officers' conduct can be made. This probe also makes recommendations regarding training and equipment needs as well as tactics used.
- The Los Angeles District Attorney's Office is independently reviewing the circumstances of the shooting to determine whether any criminal culpability may exist regarding the officers' actions.

And finally, a separate review by the Los Angeles County Office of Independent Review (OIR) is continuing. The cumulative review by OIR, which was requested by Chief Jacqueline Seabrooks and approved by the City Council in July, is assessing Police Department policies, procedures, investigatory response and training. OIR representatives responded to the Aug. 31 scene and are consulting with both the administrative and criminal investigators as well as investigators from the District Attorney's Office.

In the past 11 months, this Department has implemented reforms and reorganized to boost accountability, reduce overall crime and best preserve public safety among the residents that officers are sworn to protect. These immediate and affirmative steps are required and ongoing so the larger community and Inglewood residents can maintain their faith, confidence and support of the Police Department.

It is critical for our Department, and for all of those involved in this incident and other recent officer-involved shootings, that we let the investigations run their course before passing judgment or drawing any conclusions about the IPD or its dedicated men and women.

Note: Four photographs depicting the replica handgun are available to the media in conjunction with the release of this News Release.

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