



The Police Commission

CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

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SAN FRANCISCO POLICE DEPARTMENT BAN ON SHOOTING AT MOVING VEHICLES FOLLOWS NATIONAL BEST PRACTICE

National Policing Expert says, "Referring to Ohio State and Nice is just a distraction from what is the real issue here – shooting at cars does not make the public or officers more safe."

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SAN FRANCISCO, Friday, December 2, 2016 – On June 22, 2016, the Police Commission unanimously adopted a Use of Force policy that prohibits officers from shooting at a vehicle unless the threat of deadly force is by a means other than the vehicle. Committed to increasing both officer and public safety, the Police Commission included language in the policy that specifically indicates that no policy can predict every situation and officers must use sound judgment and critical decision making when using force. Despite recent radio and television ads from the POA stating that under the new policy, officers would be prohibited from protecting the public in a terror attack or extraordinary circumstance, the facts say otherwise and the facts matter.

FACT: SFPD officers are not hindered from protecting the public from terrorist attacks. The Use of Force policy explicitly states that no policy can predict every situation and officers are to exercise sound judgment and critical decision making when using force.

FACT: The Use of Force policy the San Francisco Police Commission adopted would allow San Francisco Police officers to shoot at a vehicle like the one used in the Nice terrorist attack. In Nice, the assailant was using both a firearm and the vehicle as weapons.

FACT: This policy banning shooting at cars was written by Former Chief Gregory P. Suhr, a 34 year SFPD veteran, supported by Interim Chief Toney Chaplin and was approved unanimously by the Police Commission that included 4 former prosecutors.

FACT: Police departments across the nation ban officers from shooting at moving vehicles. Shooting at moving vehicles is not an effective way to stop a vehicle and it endangers the lives of pedestrians, responding officers and innocent passengers who may be struck by ricocheting and stray bullet fire or the vehicle itself.

FACT: Shooting at vehicles puts officers at risk. In 2014, an SFPD officer was seriously injured when the officer's partner shot at the fleeing vehicle during a vandalism investigation and struck the officer instead.

FACT: Shooting at vehicles puts the public at risk. In 1998, a seventeen-year old innocent passenger was shot and killed when a plainclothes SFPD officer fired into a car she was in.

FACT: “San Francisco’s ban on shooting at cars is in line with national best practices. It’s about keeping both officers and the public safe,” states Chuck Wexler, Executive Director of the Police Executive Research Forum, a Washington D.C. based group that promotes best practices in policing. “Referring to Ohio State and Nice is just a distraction from what is the real issue here – shooting at cars does not make the public or officers more safe.”

FACT: When the New York Police Department restricted the shooting at vehicles in 1972, NYPD saw a 33-percent reduction in shooting incidents in 1973 and NYPD officers injured or killed in the line of duty declined significantly.^[1]

FACT: Over 25% of SFPD’s officer-involved shootings from 2000 until the present involve shootings at vehicles.

“This Use of Force policy puts the sanctity of life at its core – and shooting at moving vehicles is known as an unacceptable and inherently dangerous practice in modern policing. It is essential that we advance the policy and provide the necessary training to our officers so that they have the tools and training they need to do an incredibly difficult job,” said Suzy Loftus, President of the Police Commission.

“We know that no policy can predict every situation, but we want our officers to exercise sound judgment and critical decision making, such as exploring other tactical solutions that might be available that keep the officer safe and reduce the likelihood that life is lost,” said Vice President L. Julius Turman.

The Commission will advance our efforts to ensure robust training on this new policy and finalize the year-long effort to re-engineer use of force in San Francisco.

^[1] Annual Firearms Discharge Report 2014 New York City Policy Department, http://www.nyc.gov/html/nypd/downloads/pdf/analysis_and_planning/nypd_annual_firearms_discharge_report_2014V2.pdf; Guiding Principles On Use of Force, Police Executive Research Forum (March 2016), pg. 45-46.