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SFPD Text Message Investigation Completed

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In March 2011, the Federal Bureau of Investigations initiated an investigation into alleged serious criminal misconduct committed by several sworn members of the San Francisco Police Department, including Mr. Ian Furminger. During the Federal investigation, text message conversations were obtained from Mr. Furminger's phone records. Some of his text message conversations were found to be with sworn members of the San Francisco Police Department (SFPD).

The Administration of the SFPD was walled off from the Federal investigation and prohibited, by Federal protective order, from accessing this information until the conclusion of the criminal trial. On December 5, 2014, Ian Furminger and Edmond Robles were convicted in Federal Court as a result of the FBI investigation. Chief Suhr made it very clear as to how he felt if any of the officers involved were convicted when he said, *"There is no place in the San Francisco Police Department – and shouldn't be in any police department - for a dishonest cop."* True to his word, these officers were separated from the Department within days of their convictions.

In late-January 2015, the FBI provided volumes of documents, including the text messages, to the SFPD and the Office of Citizen Complaints. Fourteen officers became the focus of an exhaustive administrative investigation. This investigation is now complete.

Today, after conferring with Director Joyce Hicks of the Office of Citizen Complaints, Chief Suhr determined that all 14 members of the San Francisco Police Department engaged in text messaging violated Department policy to varying degrees.

Eight of the members engaged in text messages of such extreme bias (racist and/or homophobic content), and Chief Suhr believes their conduct is incompatible with the duties of a police officer. These officers' text messages are of such despicable thinking that those responsible clearly fall below the minimum standards required to be a police officer. These officers have been suspended, and their cases have been forwarded to the Police Commission with the singular recommendation of termination. (Note: One of the eight members referred to above has already resigned.)

Two other officers participated in single texting events that included inflammatory texts which did not rise to the level of the other eight officers. These two officers offered explanation(s) that should be heard by the Police Commission. They have been reassigned to non-public contact positions. Their cases have been forwarded to the Police Commission, which can mete out discipline up to and including termination.

The remaining four officers engaged in single texting events with Mr. Furminger that were determined to be violation(s) of Department policy, but not violations that involved “hate speech” (e.g., leaving an assigned area of responsibility, failure to notify anyone of Mr. Furminger’s message(s), dismissively responding to Mr. Furminger in a manner unbecoming an officer). These officers will be disciplined by the Chief of Police who can suspend an officer without pay for up to 10 days.

The San Francisco Police Department is committed to the pillars outlined in President Obama’s report, The President’s task Force on 21st Century Policing:

How officers define their role will set the tone for the community. As Plato wrote, “In a republic that honors the core of democracy—the greatest amount of power is given to those called Guardians, (Police Officers). Only those with the most impeccable character are chosen to bear the responsibility of protecting the democracy.”

The SFPD insists every officer (“Guardian”) be of such impeccable character. Chief Suhr said, *“There is no place in the San Francisco Police Department – and shouldn’t be in any police department - for a dishonest cop.”* He has added, *“There is also no place in the SFPD for any officer capable of the thinking expressed in these hateful text messages. The officers responsible for the reprehensible texts should be separated from the SFPD as soon as practical. The fine, right-minded men and women of the SFPD that are of the impeccable character required of a Guardian (police officer) expect no less.”*

The Department is grateful to U.S. Attorney Melinda Haag and her office and to FBI Special Agent in Charge David Johnson and his office for their thorough and comprehensive investigation. I also want to express my appreciation to Director Joyce Hicks and her staff at the Office of Citizen Complaints for her leadership for their assistance in this investigation.

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