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SFPD Statement Regarding Internal Affairs Investigation

March 31, 2016 | 6:16 PM

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Yesterday, Chief Suhr received a letter from District Attorney Gascon confirming receipt of information provided by the Department to the District Attorney's Office in late 2015 related to the criminal investigation of Officer Jason Lai. Officer Lai was charged last Tuesday with six misdemeanor counts for unlawful access and/or use of criminal and motor vehicle data bases. The information delivered to the District Attorney's Office was uncovered by SFPD Internal Affairs Investigators during the investigation into the sexual assault allegation made against the officer while off-duty.

As part of that criminal investigation, the Department searched cell phone records of the involved members and determined that four of those members had sent text messages containing reprehensible racial and homophobic remarks. The Department acted immediately in suspending officers involved in these texts messages and referring the matter to the Police Commission for discipline up to and including termination.

Since that time, two of the members have separated from the Department. As stated above, Officer Jason Lai, has been charged with six misdemeanor counts for unlawful access and/or use of criminal and motor vehicle data bases. Lai still faces an administration investigation for violation of Department policies. The fourth officer has an open case pending before the Police Commission where he faces discipline up to and including termination.

The investigation also revealed that three other officers had each received single questionable text messages from Officer Lai. These officers underwent an administrative investigation that determined that they had received a text message but did not send any questionable messages. The investigation concluded that there was insufficient evidence to bring charges against the officers.

Chief Suhr has been clear on his position that anyone who is capable of such behavior (sending and exchanging racist and/or homophobic text messages) clearly falls below the minimum standard for being a San Francisco Police Officer. Chief Suhr appreciates that the District Attorney supports his position on such conduct. Chief Suhr wants to reassure the public that upon discovery of these text messages, the Department took immediate action in removing the officers from public contact, bringing charges before the Police Commission and notifying the District Attorney's Office so that they could take appropriate steps in reviewing criminal case files.

Below is a letter sent to DA Gascon on the afternoon of March 31, 2016 regarding the investigation into the text messages:



EDWIN M. LEE
MAYOR

The Honorable George
District Attorney
San Francisco District A
850 Bryant Street
San Francisco, CA 941

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