

## FOREWORD

This series of articles was conceived after I wrote an article in October of 2003 about the problem of assigning moral and legal blame to split second reactions common in officer-involved-shootings. I decided that I would explore all sides of the system that Los Angeles Police officers are put through when they use deadly force. To do this, I decided I would follow a fictitious officer through the process. This officer would exhibit many of the feelings and attitudes that I had seen in representing over a thousand LAPD officers at the scenes of shootings in the last nine years. I would also try to tell the other side of the story by interviewing other persons involved in the system from detectives to the Chief of Police and letting them describe their duties and why they consider their jobs important. I also asked each of them what their advice would be to officers who had just been involved in a shooting. The result is a unique multi-sided view of a process unique to LAPD.

The series of articles started in December of 2003 and ended in January of 2005. Throughout the fourteen months that the series ran, changes in the use of force procedure took place. The most dramatic change was the elimination of the Critical Incident Investigation Division and the creation of the Force Investigation Division in August of 2004. The Force Investigation Division was divided into two distinct parts, the criminal side and the administrative side. The reason for the reorganization was to structure procedures in such a way as to avoid exposing the criminal side to the shooting officer's compelled statement, or to put it another way, to maximize the ability to criminally prosecute the officers involved in uses of force. This massive reorganization and the transfer of the Force Investigation Division to Professional Standards Bureau (the home of Internal Affairs) should serve as a *warning bell* to all officers who think that using force is not a deadly serious affair.

In 1997, an LAPD officer who was involved in an on duty shooting in 77<sup>th</sup> division was sentenced to five years in prison. In 2004, a Riverside investigator involved in an on duty shooting was sentenced to seven years in prison. Each of these officer's lives changed forever in the fifth of a second that it takes for their brains to send a signal to their trigger finger. Even when jail is not likely, severe career consequences often are. Then there are civil ramifications and psychological effects, not only on the officer, but on the officer's loved ones.

Even with the radical reorganization of Force Investigation Division, the response of the officer and the defense representative to a use of force remains essentially the same. I have added editor notes when procedures have changed since the writing of the articles, but the overall effect on an officer has not changed.

I wish to thank all of those people who gave their time to explain their roles in this process. It is in understanding the process and the divergent views and perspectives of those directly involved in the system that will help officers cope as they move through the Long Journey of Officer Shooter.

And, of course, the views expressed herein are mine and not necessarily those of the Los Angeles Police Protective League.

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