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November 30, 2015

TO: Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich, Mayor
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FROM: Max Huntsman
Inspector General

SUBJECT: LOS ANGELES COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT
DATA SHARING PROJECT AND WEBSITE

I am writing to congratulate the Sheriff's Department on initiating the first phase of its data sharing project. The LASD website now provides information about deputy-involved shootings, both those that have occurred recently (updated quarterly) and historically back to 2010. The information is available through a link to the County's Open Data website and is in easy to understand maps and charts as well as more detailed spreadsheets to allow in-depth analysis. This is just the first step and the Department has demonstrated enthusiasm for expanding the information available.

On December 31, 2014, the Office of Inspector General (OIG) issued a report entitled "Recommendation to the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department for Public Data Disclosure." The OIG found that the Sheriff's Department lagged behind other major law enforcement agencies and recommended that it make available on its website historical and current data on deputy-involved shootings, uses of force, complaints against deputies and discipline imposed on employees for misconduct. Sheriff McDonnell agreed with our analysis and directed the Department to begin work on public data sharing.

On July 23, 2015, the OIG issued a six month follow-up report on the status of the Data Sharing Project by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. This is our second follow-up report on this project. The Department has now completed and publicly released data on deputy-involved shootings. A link to the data can be

found on the lasd.org website by clicking on the "Public Data Sharing" link. A direct link is also available on the Office of Inspector General website.

The LASD has announced that this is the first of four data categories set to be released. The remaining three categories are use of force, complaints against deputies and discipline imposed on Department employees for misconduct.

The data on shootings includes the following:

- Statistics for shooting incidents including: animal shootings, hit shootings (where someone is injured or killed), non-hit shootings, unintentional discharges, warning shots, and other shootings.
- Suspect information for hit and non-hit shootings including incident date and location, suspect age, race, mental health concerns, criminal history, wounded or deceased, on probation or parole, under the influence and substance name, the number of involved deputies, the weapon involved category and weapon involved description.
- Deputy details for hit and non-hit shootings including deputy gender, race, age, years of service, assigned unit, number of previous shootings, district attorney action, whether force and tactics were within Department policy and whether the deputy received training and/or discipline.
- Details regarding animal shootings include type of weapon used by deputy, gender, race, age of deputy, type of animal and breed. Unintentional discharge data includes weapon brand, model and caliber. Additional data is provided for warning shots and other shootings.

The information provided is detailed and thorough and is an excellent first step toward a healthy level of public disclosure. Nonetheless, we recommend some aspects of the effort be improved:

Shooting Circumstances: Information released to the public regarding use of deadly force by law enforcement agencies should also inform the concerned members of the community about the known facts surrounding a deputy-involved shooting. Currently, there is no summary of the facts of the deputy-involved shootings in the data released by the Department. We believe such summary information would better place the data provided in its proper context and would be in line with best practices as currently displayed by other law enforcement agencies engaged in data sharing. We recommend the Department provide a brief synopsis of all deputy-involved shootings as part of their data release.

On October 3, 2015, the Governor of California signed Assembly Bill 71 which will require a law enforcement agency to furnish the Department of

Justice with information about every incident involving the shooting of a civilian by a peace officer, the shooting of a peace officer by a civilian, or any incident involving a use of force which results in great bodily injury to a civilian or a peace officer. The reporting requirements take effect on January 1, 2017. Agencies will be required to furnish information which is already found in the LASD's deputy-involved shooting data sets such as the gender, race and age of the involved parties. The statute's requirements will also include reporting the type of force used against the officer, the civilian, or both. In addition, agencies will also have to provide "a brief description regarding the circumstances surrounding the incident." Because the reporting mandates will take effect soon, the Department should start preparing and publishing this additional information.

User Friendly Interface: It is important that when information is presented it is easily navigated and understood. In evaluating the "Public Data Sharing" web page, we have found some aspects of it confusing and overly complex. Some of this complexity is due to technical restraints, but some can be easily overcome. The page has dozens of hyperlinks to other pages and topics such as, "General Reference Material," "LASD Services," and "Crime and Arrest Information." We believe that the LASD can enhance the user experience by succinctly explaining the Department's use of force policies, its process for investigation of deputy-involved shootings (perhaps with a flow chart), and presenting basic statistical information front and center in a visually clear manner on a page with far fewer elements.

Plain and Appropriate Language: The spreadsheet on the website uses a coding system to categorize the shooting, including whether the person was armed with a weapon. For example, "A-1" means that the person was armed with a firearm. The meaning of the codes is found on the last page of a document titled "Definitions & Terms." The codes and their grouping are at times confusing or misleading. For example, many shootings are grouped as "A: firearm," "B: weapon other than firearm," or "D: no firearm or other weapon involved in the incident." Under subcategories called "perception shootings," incidents where a deputy fired without seeing a weapon and no weapon was found are improperly included under category A or B. These "perception shootings" should be more appropriately placed in category D.

Plain and appropriate language will increase confidence in law enforcement and make analysis easier. Under the current codes, the

LASD describes only 10 of 229 shootings as “no weapon involved.” If “perception shootings” where no weapon was seen or recovered are included, the number rises to 46. A recent KPCC (public radio) study claims that 35% of people shot by LASD were unarmed. Although my office does not have access to the KPCC data, it appears the disparity is primarily because of definitions. Is a person driving a vehicle toward deputies on foot “unarmed?” Does the shooting of a person grabbing at a deputy’s weapon “involve” a firearm? While there will always be points of disagreement, it is critical that the data presented be as clear as possible to allow intelligent discussion of such issues.

The Sheriff’s Department has also sought feedback from public stakeholders on the content, utility and format of the data sharing website. We will monitor this initiative with interest and continue our constructive dialogue with the LASD as it responds to feedback. The Inspector General thanks the Sheriff for his enthusiastic implementation of this important step toward open policing. The OIG looks forward to observing the public data sharing website grow and evolve to fulfill its potential.

MH:WK

c: Jim McDonnell, Sheriff
Sachi A. Hamai, Chief Executive Officer
Patrick Ogawa, Acting Executive Officer
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