

Comprehensive Study of Secret Sheriff’s Deputy Subgroups

For decades, the Sheriff’s Department has struggled to address secret deputy subgroups. At least as far back as 1971, a secret subgroup called the "Little Devils" existed at the East Los Angeles station. In 1992, a watchdog panel pressed the Sheriff’s Department to root out these secret subgroups. Twenty years later, the Citizens' Commission on Jail Violence found:

The [Sheriff’s] Department has a long history of deputy cliques – groups of deputies who self-associate and self-identify, often because of a particular posting or assignment, to the exclusion of those outside the group. ... Although work-related groups and associations are natural and can be healthy, these subcultures within the Department contributed to acts of insubordination, aggressive behavior, and excessive force in the jails for many years.

The County has faced significant liability for these ongoing issues, including a 2014 lawsuit for which the County paid \$1.5 million to a female Los Angeles Sheriff’s deputy who alleged that she had suffered verbal abuse and hazing by her colleagues, and accused several male officers at the East LA Station of being part of the Banditos clique and bullying female deputies into submitting to sexual advances.

MOTION

SOLIS _____

RIDLEY-THOMAS _____

KUEHL _____

BARGER _____

HAHN _____

In July 2018, then-Sheriff McDonnell announced that he was launching "a comprehensive study of the issue of tattoos and the Sheriff's Department and subgroup cultures."

On March 7, 2019, the local media reported that seven deputies have filed legal claims against the County demanding tens of millions of dollars for failing to address the hostile work environment that one secret subgroup has allegedly created.

The belief that secret subgroups exist has plagued the Sheriff's Department for decades, and must be conclusively addressed for the sake of public trust and safety, Deputy safety, and Sheriff's Department morale.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the Board of Supervisors:

1. Direct the Office of Inspector General, the Civilian Oversight Commission, County Counsel, and all relevant stakeholders to continue the comprehensive study of secret deputy subgroups, with input from relevant community stakeholders, including the relevant unions.
2. Request that the Sheriff direct Sheriff's Department personnel to cooperate in this comprehensive study of deputy secret subgroups in accordance with his duty to the public and the deputies sworn to protect County residents.
3. Direct the Office of Inspector General, County Counsel, and Civilian Oversight Commission to report back to the Board within 90 days on the status of the study, including the cooperation of the Sheriff.
4. Direct the Chief Executive Officer to report back in 30 days with recommendations of how to expand the Police Integrity Oversight unit in the Public Defender's office and the Integrity Unit within the District Attorney's office to appropriately respond to identified relevant issues.

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HLS: rk