

News from: **Office of Mayor Libby Schaaf**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Statement Regarding the Findings of an Investigation into the Use of Social Media Accounts by Oakland Police Officers**

*Oakland, CA* – The City of Oakland released the following statement regarding the findings of an investigation into use of social media accounts by Oakland police officers:

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In January, the Oakland Police Department became aware of an Instagram account that hosted deeply offensive content that was sexist, racist, and totally unacceptable to the standards of our community. The account also elevated forms of hate speech and subversive memes that criticized the policies and cultural changes that have made OPD a nationally recognized leader in progressive, constitutional policing. The creator of the offensive account appeared to be intimately familiar with the department, and specifically the crime reduction teams, or CRTs. Since it was clear there was a possibility that the account had been created by a current employee, the situation warranted an immediate investigation.

Due to the account holder's familiarity with CRTs, the investigation began with every officer who served in those units, individuals located in specialized units, and every officer in patrol and investigative units who intersected with those officers. Investigators took the unannounced action to seize more than 140 work phones from these Oakland police officers. Investigators scraped the content and online histories from all of those phones.

To ensure the integrity of the inquiry, Mayor Libby Schaaf and City Administrator Ed Reiskin took immediate action to hire a third-party independent investigator. The investigator's directives were to expose the account's creator through IT records and determine if any current Oakland employees had engaged with the offensive content and/or had otherwise violated any department policies.

The result was an unprecedented investigation in its size and scope. The independent investigators cast a net as wide as legally and constitutionally allowable.

Oakland's Community Police Review Agency, overseen by Oakland's Citizen Police Commission, also conducted a separate independent investigation. The findings and discipline announced today were the result of full concurrence between the Oakland Police Department and the independent Community Police Review Agency.

## ***Attachment A***

This broad and deep investigation revealed violations of OPD policy related to the offensive Instagram page, as well as several other unrelated violations that were discovered during the course of examining all content and online histories of the more than 140 department-issued cell phones.

Of the hundreds of online histories studied, nine officers were found to have violated department policy. Violations included:

- Accessing inappropriate material on department-issued equipment (including materials unrelated to the Instagram page)
- Conduct that brings disrepute to OPD
- Sexual harassment or other conduct in violation of Oakland's workplace standards
- Failure to perform duties and responsibilities
- Failure to report violations

The investigation determined that the offensive account was created by a former Oakland police officer shortly after he was terminated for violating department policy. Of the nine officers sustained for violating department policies, two have since taken positions with other law enforcement agencies. Oakland has notified those two agencies of the investigation's findings.

The nine officers who were found to have violated department policy ranged in rank from officer to Lieutenant. The discipline issued to them ranged from an 3-day unpaid suspension to a 25-day unpaid suspension.

In an effort to ensure this never happens again, the Oakland department will:

- Review and strengthen existing policies for all department-issued technology
- Create additional training for the appropriate use of department cell phones
- Develop robust training to ensure no violations of the zero-tolerance racial policy that forbids any engagement with racist, extremist, or white supremacy groups
- Require department employees to report all work-related social media accounts to the OPD Office of Inspector General
- Require mandatory collection of all department social media account names and passwords by the Office of Inspector General
- Audit content of department-issued technology at any time by the Office of Inspector General to ensure it is appropriate, work related, contains no inappropriate images or content and that the material does not violate department policy
- Require that employees shall have no work-related social media accounts attached to their personal phones nor use personal phones for OPD business
- Require that employees shall have no personal social media accounts attached to their department-issued technology

**Attachment A**

- Require the OPD Office of Inspector General to hold all work-related social media accounts and passwords
- Develop cultural-competency training with Stanford University and deliver to all relevant staff
- Provide outside expert to conduct additional sexual harassment and inappropriate behavior trainings in the workplace

“Sexist and racist behaviors are far too prevalent in our culture and have no place in our public safety institutions,” Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf said. “I wholeheartedly and strongly condemn any behavior, including online communications, that supports or engages with sexist or racist tropes. I’m heartened by the unprecedented size, scope, and thoroughness of this independent investigation, which held officers accountable and created new policies that raise our standards and expectations.”

The final investigation report was submitted to the federal court overseeing *Allen v. City of Oakland*. The Court will determine which parts of the investigation, if any, may become publicly available.

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