POLICE MISCONDUCT MAY BE UNDERREPORTED

Summary

The Office of the Independent Police Auditor (IPA) was formed to address the potential for bias that could result from the police department investigating itself. The IPA is the City of San Jose's (City) chartered agency for civilian oversight of police department complaints, established by the City in 1993. It provides auditing oversight of the Internal Affairs Unit (IA) of the San Jose Police Department (SJPD) that investigates complaints of subject officer misconduct. A "subject officer" in this report is a police officer accused of misconduct. Although the IPA is functioning to the capacity of its limited authorized powers, recent statistical analyses, as shown on page 5, indicate that police misconduct may be underreported because definitive, objective criteria for categorizing conduct are not used, and the IPA lacks the authority to classify and investigate citizen complaints. The IPA, an independent civilian agency reporting directly to the Mayor and the San Jose City Council (City Council), is authorized only to monitor complaints and their classification at filing. After the completion of an investigation, the IPA reviews the investigation report and can appeal the findings. Also, the IPA prepares statistical analyses documenting the number of complaints by category and their ultimate resolution. This Grand Jury report focuses on recent statistical trends of "external complaints," those made by citizens. It excludes internal complaints, those made by police officers.

Citizens can file complaints with the IA or the IPA. The IA is responsible for the classification of all citizen complaints. For this report, the "Inquiry" classification is considered a "complaint." The SJPD does not consider an Inquiry as a complaint but rather as a citizen contact. Complaints can be classified into one of six categories, only four of which are important to this report: Formal, Procedural, Command Review, and Inquiries. The description of each key category is found in the "Categories" box on page 4. The annual total number of citizen complaints was just under 450 for 2006; of these, over 50% were classified as "Inquiries" and since 2003 the number of Inquiries has doubled. This is a concern because a complaint classified as an Inquiry is, by definition, almost incidental in nature and results in no officer-related investigation or tracking; that is, no officer accountability. However, this has recently changed. Beginning April 2007, the IA initiated an off-line pilot program of tracking Inquiry-type complaints. Subject officer specific data from this off-line program is not presently accessible to the IPA for monitoring purposes, as in the case of all other more serious complaints which are maintained in the IAPro, the IA's main database.

The 2006-2007 Santa Clara County Civil Grand Jury (Grand Jury) reviewed the IPA's 2003 to 2006 Year End Reports, attended two community-IPA-SJPD-Human

Rights Commission (HRC) forums, and conducted extensive interviews. A review of all the gathered information indicates significant differences between the IPA and the IA in classifying complaints. The IPA and the IA have a different hierarchy of classification. For clarity they should be the same. A contributing cause is that the four key categories lack definitive, objective criteria to use for complaint classification. Subject officer accountability is directly related to the degree of alleged misconduct being accurately reflected by the classification category. Since the IPA is the agency responsible for civilian auditing oversight of the SJPD, it needs access to the appropriate data, including that generated by Inquiries. Significant statistical trends identified by the IPA can be interpreted as an underreporting of subject officer misconduct. To address this, certain limited oversight authority should be granted to the IPA. This would include being the principal organization for receiving complaints, having the final authority to classify all citizen complaints, and sharing investigative powers with the IA. In addition, enhancing and unifying the complaint form and filing process, including the establishment of objective criteria for each category of complaint, should improve the accuracy of oversight and result in an increase in the public's confidence in the effectiveness of its civilian oversight agency, the IPA.

In its research the Grand Jury noted that neither the IPA nor the IA has ever been subjected to a performance audit. Specifically, a performance audit that examines the quality of criteria used for classifying complaints could contribute to a clarifying of the category differences. In turn, this would lead to a more standardized evaluation of officer conduct and increased effectiveness of the classification procedure. To build the public's confidence in the effectiveness of the IPA and the IA, the Grand Jury recommends that the City Council require performance audits for both.

Discussion

One of the most sensitive areas of public concern is citizen-police relations. These relations are built, in part, on citizen-police contacts, which can range from positive interactions to violent confrontations. In 2006 there were just over 400,000 citizen-police contacts in San Jose which generated just under 450 total citizen complaints. Since personal perception plays a major role in the characterization of the contact event, an objective documentation and classification of citizen-police contacts is essential to fairly and accurately monitor the performance of the public's most visible authoritative agency, the police department.

This Grand Jury has used the statistics from the IA's database in examining the issue of complaint classification. The statistics showed a trend of an increase in the number of complaints in the category of Inquiries. At the same time, there is a trend showing a substantial decline in the number of complaints in the Command Review category. These two trends were compared, and a conclusion was reached. The trends, the comparison, and the conclusion will be discussed more thoroughly in the "Classification Issue" section of this report.

Community Forums and Interviews

As part of its investigation, the Grand Jury interviewed 18 individuals and was present at community forums attended by more than 450 citizens. The forums were intended to provide the public with a venue for its concerns. Over 90 community members from various ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds and organizations spoke at the forums. The Grand Jury heard some positive comments for the SJPD and their safety enforcement; however, there were far more complaints than accolades.

The 18 interviews conducted by the Grand Jury were quite varied in the range of perspective of those interviewed. The Grand Jury interviewed officials of the Office of the City Auditor, SJPD, IA, IPA, Independent Police Advisory Committee, Mayor's office, The Coalition of Concerned Citizens, NAACP, ACLU, People Acting in Community Together, African American Parent Coalition, and several concerned citizens who spoke at both forums.

Common complaints heard by the Grand Jury at the forums and interviews were: (1) inappropriate police conduct, including rude behavior; (2) racial profiling, exemplified by vehicular and pedestrian stops; (3) police harassment; (3) reclassification of complaints into Inquiries; (4) inability to obtain information about subject officers; (5) ineffectiveness of the IPA and the HRC; (6) lack of accountability due to police investigating themselves; (7) length of time to commence and complete investigations, and (8) failure to respond to complaints.

Filing a Complaint

Citizens may report their complaints of alleged police misconduct to either the IPA or the IA. The principal filing organization is the IA and the filing process is called the "intake." A secondary intake is the IPA, and for the past four years the intake for the IPA has remained level at about 40 percent of the total complaints. The intake procedure is initiated by filling out a complaint form. A complaint form is completed by the complainant at the IPA and by the intake officer at the IA. The IA and IPA use different complaint forms, having sixteen items common to both and seven items unique to each. The intake officer interviews the complainant and, with his/her consent, records the interview. The complainant is provided with a summary of his/her statement, not a copy of the complaint itself. Based on the complainant's interview, the complaints filed at the IPA are given a "preclassification" category.

According to the SJPD Internal Affairs Unit Guidelines, "Complaints and inquiries will be accepted in any form (in person, by telephone/fax, Independent Police Auditor (IPA) referrals, in writing, third party, via e-mail, or anonymously.)" An official of the IA informed the Grand Jury that, although not routinely advised so, complainants have the right to obtain a copy of their complaint when they appear in person for their interviews. They may also obtain a copy of their tape-recorded meeting with the IA interviewing officer(s). The complainants are also not made aware of the recordings' availability.

There have been very few requests for the recordings. The complaint forms give no clearly defined descriptions of the four main categories of complaints: "Inquiry," "Command Review," "Procedural," and "Formal;" nor is there a place for the complainant to sign a statement that he or she understands the categories of complaints and what classification they believe should apply to his/her complaint.

The Classification Issue

A classification system is used by the SJPD that identifies and defines officer conduct when involved in a citizen-police contact situation. The categories range from incidental "citizen contact" to the most serious "Formal" complaint. The "Categories" box below gives the descriptions currently used for the four classification categories important to this report. The descriptions are summarized from the *SJPD Internal Affairs Unit Guidelines*, June 2006, pages 8, 9, and 10.

Internal Affairs Unit Categories

Formal (External, civilian): Initiated by a citizen alleging misconduct which, after an initial investigation by the intake officer, the IA determines that the facts of the allegation, if proven, would amount to a violation of the law or of Department policies, procedures, rules or regulations.

Procedural: After an initial investigation by the intake officer the Department determines the subject officer acted reasonably and within policy and procedure given the specific circumstances and facts of the incident and there is no factual basis to support the misconduct allegations; or the allegation is a dispute of fact wherein there is no independent information, evidence, or witnesses available to support the complaint and another judicial entity is available to process the concerns of the complainant.

Command Review: Involves allegations of minor transgressions on the part of a subject officer, which may be handled informally by bringing the matter to the attention of the officer's chain of command.

Inquiry: An issue of concern that is immediately resolved to the satisfaction of the citizen, without requiring a more extensive investigation. An Inquiry that is not immediately resolved to the citizen's satisfaction can be reclassified and fully investigated. Officers' names are not tracked in cases classified as Inquiries.

There are key elements of accountability applicable to the four categories that show the important differences between them. The chart below highlights those differences.

IA Procedure Requirements						
		IA				
	Recorded	Interviews	IA			
Categories	Complaint	Officer	Investigation	On File		
Formal	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		
Procedural	Yes	No	Yes	Yes		
Command Review	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		
Inquiry	Yes	No	No	Yes*		
*Off-line manual log since April 2007						

The classification issue and its critical relationship to the accountability of the SJPD to the public were examined most specifically by targeting the Inquiry category. The Grand Jury examined Inquiries because of a significant increase in their incidence since 2003. It is a key distinction that a citizen-police contact classified by the IA as an Inquiry is not considered a "complaint;" rather, it is considered incidental in nature and "immediately resolved" to the citizens' satisfaction. The Grand Jury is concerned that the significant increase in Inquiries indicates these complaints are being given a lower category classification than is justified. Upgrading an Inquiry to Command Review or higher would increase subject officer review and accountability if, in fact, the citizen-police contact was more serious than merely incidental.

The following chart shows four years of complaint data from the 2006 IPA Year End Report. It indicates a significant increase of 106 percent of citizen-police contacts classified as the less serious Inquiry-type complaints, in contrast to the more serious categories of Command Review and Procedural which, taken together, have increased only 17 percent.

IPA Complaint Data						
Categories	2003	2004	2005	2006		
Formal	86	111	106	107		
Procedural	27	32	42	76		
Command Review	39	29	7	1		
Inquiry	113	118	203	233		
Other*	30	45	25	27		
Total	295	335	383	444		
*Policy; No Boland; Withdrawn.						

A significant classification analysis was done by the IPA on 401 Inquiry-type complaints from 2005 and 2006. This represented 92 percent of all Inquiry-type complaints for those years, and the results were as follows:

```
127 cases (32%) – IPA agrees with SJPD classification
202 cases (50%) – IPA disagrees with SJPD classification
72 cases (18%) – Not enough information
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The 50 percent disagreement for Inquiry only complaints, as shown above, is substantially different than the 5 percent disagreement for all complaints. This difference raises questions about the lack of definitive criteria for all complaint categories classification and their standardized use by the IPA and IA. This has become more significant since 2003, when Inquiries were 38 percent of all complaints, and 2006 when they were 52 percent of all complaints.

Currently, over 50 percent of all citizen complaints are classified as Inquiries. Accountability, dependent upon accurate complaint classification, is a critical element in the public's confidence in its oversight agencies. All the complaint categories require definitive criteria that distinguish one category from another. The Grand Jury finds that the lack of specific criteria defining each complaint category inhibits the accuracy of complaint categorization. Definitive criteria must be applied to the facts of the complaint, and the facts must be collected in an objective and professional manner. This is critical in accurately classifying complaints.

The Early Warning System (EWS) and Intervention Counseling Program

Complaints from the community serve as a quality control measure for the SJPD. The response of the IA is what the public sees as accountability. It is imperative that accountability be based on accurate documentation; that is, having the ability to track subject officer misconduct and responding promptly to correct it. In 2003 the SJPD initiated a program that identifies and addresses officers who are developing a record of misconduct. It was called the EWS and became the Intervention Counseling Program. The subject officers are scheduled for counseling regarding their behavior. This counseling effort is a proactive method of preserving an officer's career while improving the SJPD's reputation in the community. An example of the program's positive results is that the number of officers getting four or more complaints per year has dropped from three officers in 2005 to zero officers in 2006. There were five officers who received three complaints in 2006. The SJPD has an officer base of 1346.

In the past, Inquiries did not trigger an officer's entry into the EWS; however, an IA procedural change became effective in April 2007, to expand subject officer accountability. Inquiries are now tracked and maintained in an off-line pilot program that records the officers' names, badge numbers, and background information. SJPD management receives a manual report of this information on Monday of every week. This new procedure allows SJPD management to get more detailed and timely reporting on officers accused of misconduct. Although it is not yet a part of the IAPro database, if

this information is incorporated this should increase the accountability and prevent premature dismissal of cases due to misclassification.

Investigative Powers and the IPA

There have been repeated requests from community members, various organizations, and complainants asking the City Council to expand the authority of the IPA from an auditing and monitoring agency to a more powerful civilian oversight agency. It is important to note that at present the IPA has little or no recourse on complaints deemed by the IA to require limited or no investigation.

The SJPD Internal Affairs Unit Guidelines, states that the IPA or his/her designee has the right to attend the interviews of all subject officers and witnesses. The IPA has requested advance notification of all subject officer interviews regarding cases involving the use of force, as well as other serious cases that will subsequently be reported by the IA to the IPA.

The Grand Jury was informed by an official of the SJPD that the IPA has no authority during formal interviews to directly question the subject officer. Granting the IPA the right to question officers as a participant in a thorough investigation would be another way of increasing its investigative powers.

Performance Audits

Both the IPA and the IA use established policies, procedures, and a common database, IAPro, to accomplish their main mission of the SJPD oversight. One of the procedures, complaint classification, should be evaluated for the distinctiveness of each category of complaint. The quality of the category definition is essential for effective use of the criteria. This will improve the objectiveness and standardization of the classification process.

How efficient these agencies are and the effectiveness of their policies and procedures have never been thoroughly evaluated by an outside agency. Nor has an independent evaluation of the statistical program and analyses been performed. This Grand Jury echoes a recommendation by a prior Grand Jury report that the IPA be subjected to a performance audit. This should be expanded to include a performance audit of the IA.

Conclusion

At recent community-police forums, concerns were raised as to the ability of the SJPD to appropriately oversee itself through the response of the Internal Affairs Unit to citizen complaints and a monitoring of their investigations. The IPA, which reports on the actions of the IA through auditing of complaint investigations and monitoring of IA statistics, questioned the accuracy of the current complaint classification process in the 2005 and 2006 IPA Year End Reports. A special analysis of 92 percent of those years' Inquiry-type complaints showed that the IPA disagreed with the IA's Inquiry classification at least 50 percent of the time.

Although citizen complaints may be received by both the IPA and the IA, only the IA is authorized to investigate the complaint, and give a final classification. The IPA comments when there is a perceived discrepancy within a category or between categories. As an example, since 2003 the Command Review category went from 13 percent down to 0.2 percent; that is, a single Command Review complaint for all of 2006. Correspondingly, since 2003 the percentage of Inquiry and Procedural-type complaints taken together has gone up from 47 percent to 70 percent of all complaints. These two categories of complaints in comparison to Formal complaints carry little subject officer accountability, investigation, or discipline. A new EWS manual off-line log, that captures and manages information from Inquiry-type complaints, was initiated in April 2007. If this procedure is formally incorporated into the IAPro database, it will increase officer accountability.

The number of citizen complaints is quite low, about 450 for 2006. Put into perspective, there were just over 400,000 citizen-police contacts in 2006, and there are 1346 police officers in San Jose. The ratio of complaints to all citizen-police contacts is 0.1 percent. However, it is a concern of the Grand Jury that, given the current complaint classification and resolution procedures, a number of citizens do not have the confidence to report perceived officer misconduct.

In order to promote public confidence that police oversight is objective and effective, the Grand Jury recommends that more joint responsibility be given to the IPA as the principal intake location and that the IPA be authorized to classify all citizengenerated complaints. As a critical first step, the IPA and IA should jointly develop category-specific criteria for complaint classification purposes, and a category hierarchy that goes from the incidental Citizen Contact to the most serious Formal complaint. An improved, single complaint form used by both the IA and IPA would standardize the complaint filing process. In addition, the IPA should be granted co-investigation authority for those cases the IA does not investigate, or cases questioned by the IPA. This especially includes the most serious Formal complaints – use of force, and officer-involved shootings. Finally, both the IPA and the Internal Affairs Unit of the SJPD should be subjected to a performance audit that should be ordered by the City Council. By following these recommendations better police-community relations will be achieved.

Findings

The following findings were reviewed with the subject agencies:

F1: There are no objective, explicit criteria defining each of the complaint classification categories.

F2: Complaint forms do not:

- **a.** require a complainant's signature,
- **b.** clearly define the key classification categories,
- **c.** provide a place for the complainant to indicate the classification he/she believes applies,
- **d.** consolidate information common to both the IA and IPA on a single complaint form.

F3: The complaint forms do not advise complainants of the right to receive copies of their written statements and/or tape-recordings made during their interviews.

F4: Only the IA is authorized to formally classify all citizen complaints.

F5: The Inquiry-type complaint, which represents the largest percentage of complaints, requires no investigations and no officer contact. A pilot program, initiated in April 2007, currently records Inquiry-type complaints and subject officer information.

F6: The number of Inquiry-type complaints has continued to increase each year since 2003, going from 113 to 233 complaints in 2006.

F7: In 2005 and 2006, the IPA did a classification analysis of 401 complaints classified by the IA as Inquiries. The IPA disagreed with the classifications on 50 percent of the complaints.

F8: As of April 2007, an off-line data collection pilot program of Inquiries is being maintained and is considered part of the SJPD's Early Warning System, but it is still not a part of the IAPro database.

F9: The IPA is authorized to review closed investigative reports. The IPA is authorized to be a part of the initial investigation into officer-involved shootings and does an in-depth audit of all use-of-force complaints.

F10: Neither the IPA nor the IA has undergone a performance audit.

Recommendations

The 2006-2007 Civil Grand Jury recommends that:

- **R1:** The IPA and IA should jointly establish definitive and objective criteria for each of the complaint classification categories for their use.
- **R2:** The IPA and IA should jointly develop a single citizen complaint form that includes:
 - **a.** complainant's signature line,
 - **b.** key complaint classification categories clearly defined and explained,
 - **c.** complainant's opinion of the classification category appropriate to his/her complaint.
- **R3:** The IPA and IA include on the citizen complaint form an advisory notification that a copy of the complaint is available, as well as a tape recording of the interview.
- **R4:** The IPA should be authorized by the City Council to formally classify all citizen complaints.
- **R5:** All essential Inquiry complaint information, including that of the subject officer, should be incorporated into the IAPro database and made available to the IPA.
- **R6:** No recommendation.
- **R7:** No recommendation.
- **R8:** The off-line pilot program that tracks Inquiry subject officer information should be immediately incorporated into the IAPro database and made available to the IPA.
- **R9:** The City Council should grant the IPA co-investigative authority for cases the IA does not investigate, those questioned by the IPA, and all complaints of officer-involved shootings and use of force.
- **R10:** Performance audits should be conducted of both the IPA and IA.

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Interviews and Visitations

November 30, 2006	Observed testimony during public forum at San Jose City College. Panel members consisted of officials from the San Jose Police Department, Office of the Independent Police Auditor, and the San Jose Human Rights Commission.
January 18, 2007	Observed testimony during public forum at Eastside Union High School District. Panel members consisted of officials from the San Jose Police Department, Office of the Independent Police Auditor, and the San Jose Human Rights Commission.
February 2, 2007	Interviewed officials of the Office of the San Jose City Auditor.
February 16, 2007	Interviewed official from the Northern California Office of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU).
February 16, 2007	Interviewed official of the Office of the San Jose Independent Police Auditor.
February 23, 2007	Interviewed official from the San Jose Silicon Valley Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).
February 24, 2007	Observed testimony from Police Records Panel and community members before the Sunshine Reform Task Force.

Interviews and Visitations - continued

February 26, 2007	Interviewed official from the Office of the San Jose City Attorney.
March 2, 2007	Interviewed official from the Northern California Office of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU).
March 7, 2007	Interviewed member of the Police Advisory Board.
March 7, 2007	Toured the San Jose Police Department and interviewed official of the Office of Internal Affairs.
April 25, 2007	Interviewed member of the African American Parent Coalition.
April 25, 2007	Interviewed members of the Coalition of Concerned Citizens and Organizations.
April 25, 2007	Interviewed official of the Office of the San Jose Independent Police Auditor.
April 27, 2007	Interviewed member of People Acting in Community Together.
May 2, 2007	Interviewed official of the Office of the San Jose Independent Police Auditor.
May 4, 2007	Interviewed official of the San Jose Police Department.
May 15, 2007	Interviewed official of the San Jose Police Department, Internal Affairs Unit.
May 18, 2007	Interviewed official of the San Jose Mayor's Office.

PASSED and ADOPTED by the Santa Clara County Civil Grand Jury on this 12 th day June 2007.	of
Ronald R. Layman	
Foreperson	
David M. Burnham	
Foreperson Pro tem	
Kathryn C. Philp Secretary	