

# Persecution of L.A. Officer Charged Defense Testimony at Colleagues' Police Hearings Blamed

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Los Angeles police sergeant, who was relieved of duty because of allegations he was involved with a narcotics suspect, is being persecuted by the police because of his "zealousness" in defending officers' sensitive matters, his attorney said Thursday.

James M. Ingram, 34, has acted as a defense representative for numerous officers at Board of Rights hearings and has been involved in issues which tend to be "exposed" and "get a lot of attention," he said. Ingram was unwilling to be interviewed about the allegations.

Tim does believe there should be changes in the way officers are interviewed. "He's one of the most methodical officers I know . . . on matters where those have a rank of captain and above are treated differently than those with the rank of sergeant and below."

For example, Loew said, the sergeant was involved in an incident where an officer accused of working at an outside job without the necessary permit. Ingram went over to

City Hall, he said, and pulled the records of high-ranking LAPD officers who are required to list any potential conflict of interest because of outside businesses they might be connected with.

"Ingram pointed out these captains and above are treated differently, that they didn't necessarily have a permit," he said. " . . . It's not supposed to be this way but sometimes it is."

Loew said the sergeant, a 13-year veteran assigned to the Hollywood division, first contacted him almost two months ago when he was in the hospital after being wounded by a sniper's bullet while driving to the Police Academy in Elystan Park.

The attorney said internal affairs investigators went to the hospital and attempted to ask his client questions "while he was lying there in pain."

Internal Affairs Capt. Don Vincent said investigators went to the hospital twice.

The first time, Vincent said, officers were there to "check him out . . . to see how he was doing." The second time they visited him to tell him about the allegations and give him an opportunity to respond, but Ingram refused to talk according to the captain.

Loew said the sergeant, who has been on sick leave since the sniper incident and still has a bullet lodged in his back, is not guilty of any of the allegations contained in the 11-count complaint released by Los Angeles police five days ago.

No criminal charges have been filed against him. The same charges being made against Ingram are made almost daily against officers and they are investigated and are usually dropped or the officers are exonerated," he said.

The most serious of the department's allegations accuses Ingram of furnishing firearms to narcotics suspects, ingesting cocaine and receiving a \$1,000 gratuity from a suspect for passing on confidential police information.

Loew said Ingram did sell firearms to the suspects, but they were all registered—either to the sergeant or to other LAPD officers. The department was informed of the sale, he said.

He said the Sept. 5, 1979, sale occurred before Ingram was informed that the suspects, who work at an auto body shop in Hollywood, were under an "informal" investigation. After that he broke off contact with them, the attorney said.

Loew said the cocaine charge stemmed from a dinner at two of the suspects' home after Ingram was told the investigation against the suspects had been dropped.

Loew said an officer was assigned to tail Ingram and parked down the street from the suspects' house. Looking through a window with a pair of binoculars, the assigned officer saw "a profile that was consistent with someone sniffing cocaine," Loew said.

He said one of the suspects later passed a police lie detector test while denying Ingram had taken cocaine. The suspect was never booked in connection with the incident, he said.

Loew said the gratuity Ingram is accused of accepting also revolves around an incident which occurred after the sergeant was informed the investigator of the suspects had ended.

He said the sergeant sold a classic Mustang car to one of the suspects for \$4,000. Police investigators put the value of the car at \$3,000, he said.

At no time did Ingram reveal confidential information to any of the suspects, Loew said.

Vincent, in response to several of the attorney's remarks, said "We don't do things like that. If we have a case we have a case. We don't bring charges against a policeman unless there's evidence."

He said that to . . . protect Ingram's right of confidentiality before the Board of Rights convenes specifics of the case should not be discussed by the department at this time.

The hearing will be held around the first of the year. If found guilty, the maximum administrative penalty Ingram could face would be dismissal from the force.

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