

DECEMBER 16 2003

TO: THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS, and SHERIFF LOU BLANAS
FROM: HENRY HARRY
SUBJECT: CENTRAL DIVISION LAW ENFORCEMENT SERVICES

I have had the honor of serving as a Law Enforcement officer in the State of California for twelve years. The last seven have been with the Sacramento County Sheriff's Department. In June of 2000, I started working the streets of the Central Division as a patrolman. In February of 2002, I started my current assignment as the Central Division's Drug Elimination Officer.

For the past 22 months, I have been on the front line of our nation's and our community's war on drugs. I am sad to report that the news from the front line is not good. In far too many of Central's neighborhoods, our citizens still suffer in the shadows of the drug trade. Many are trapped in their own homes, afraid of the drug dealers who rule all just fifteen feet from their front doors and windows.

There are some, even inside of law enforcement, who believe the drug trade and high crime are the problems of the disposable class of our society and therefore does not merit a real and meaningful law enforcement response. In the Central Division, a grossly insufficient number of officers have been deployed to address what no one will deny is one of the worst crime and drug problems in the county. Over the years, elected officials, the Sheriff and the Board of Supervisors, have engaged in a policy and practice of ignoring crime and drug trafficking in Central, especially in poor and minority neighborhoods. Because of this policy of abandonment, Central has deteriorated into a state in which street level drug trafficking can truly be described as epidemic.

The negative affect of the County's policy of abandonment can be seen in the crime, blight, and drug ridden area around 14TH Avenue and 44TH Street. This Oak Park neighborhood has experienced several recent incidents between law enforcement and hostile citizens which have left me and others fearful of riots in the community. Many cities across our nations are scarred by riots. In 1992 Los Angles experienced riots -- in 2000 the city of Cincinnati experienced riots -- in 2003 the city of Benton Harbor experienced riots. I am sure before these catastrophes occurred the signs were clear to some in the community. The signs are clear right here in Sacramento. The question is what will we do? Will we just wait? Do we care? Are we sending a message that larger police budgets only come after a devastating event?

We must work to prevent such a catastrophe in Sacramento.

The Sheriff, the Board, and the three individual Supervisors who represent portions of the Central Division, have failed to address the crime and drug problem for too long in Central. This failure makes certain the cycle of high crime, violence, and drug trafficking will continue. The county's policy, to a large degree, directly contributes to the shootings, stabbings, drug sales, overall crime, and suffering in Central. This is the nightmare to which you have condemned many hard working citizens to in Central.

Why have you not fixed this problem?

Can you fix this problem?

Can we win a war on drugs?

What is the strategy for fighting drugs in Central?

Do we need a special tax district to fund more officers in Central?

Would some minor or major departmental restructuring help?

What can we do to keep officers and resources in Central?

Are resources deployed in the most efficient manner?

If the Board and Sheriff cannot provide adequate public safety to Central's citizens, then it should help Central incorporate so we can provide better public protection for ourselves. The people of Elk Grove have done a wonderful job of improving their public safety. As a result, their children are less likely to be victims of crime. I value the life of children in Central as much as the people of Elk Grove value the lives of their children. I am angered this Board keeps undervaluing the lives of our children in Central through a policy of neglect.

While I place blame on the elected officials, I too share in the blame. I am a part of this government – every officer is apart of this government. We have a duty. At the end of the day we must each look ourselves in the mirror and ask: did I do my best for the people? I can no longer watch while this system perpetrates smoke and mirrors trickery on the people. Therefore, I shamefully admit my complicity in the scam. Officers who remain silent on this issue contribute to the problem. My silence helped further the scam. I should have spoken out sooner. I have worn this badge long enough to know better. To those citizens in Central who have suffered because of my cowardice, I truly apologize.

As the Drug Elimination Officer, I have worked, alone, in some of the worst crime and drug infested areas in the Central Division. Despite a large drug problem and a population of about 115,000 people in our district, I am the only officer within our district who's primary assignment is to address street level drug trafficking. That seems unimaginable in a modern law enforcement agency, especially in a community with a drug and crime problem as notorious as Central's. Now consider this, Elk Grove has four

detectives to address their community's drug problem, while Central is stuck with just me.

I poured everything into an unwavering fight against drugs. I sacrificed a lot. I made significant improvements in some drug areas. While my accomplishments have made me proud, they have also left me troubled. It is troubling to know the county could have made dramatic impacts on the drug trade in Central, yet chose to ignore the problem.

Today I continue my solo fight against drugs in Central. These are some tough streets. Sometimes I want to give up, but then I think about our brave soldiers fighting and dying in a war for our freedom. Maybe I can make this community a little better for the ones who have to come back to Central when they are done.

Despite the county's policy of ignoring Central, I cannot give up. As I patrol my district, I see the many faces and many races of the poorest children in our community. I reject the proposition that they must grow up in crime ridden communities. Yet, I bare the knowledge that we do not change this policy, children born in poor communities in the Central Division today will grow up over the next twenty years in drug and crime infested communities. Who has stood up for these children? If I do not stand up and fight for them, who will?

There are many good officers in my district who, each day, are prepared to give their lives in service to their community. Who has stood up for them? I will stand up for them. They too deserve more from this Board and this Sheriff.

If it is true that each Board member gets \$20,000 to spend as they like, how about the group pool the money and get me a partner. It is dangerous on Morningstar Drive, Young Street, 68TH Avenue/Gigi Place, Sunnyslope Drive, Clover Manor, Vintage Park Drive/Elk Grove-Florin Road, Stockton Boulevard, and many other areas in Central.

Would you want your son or daughter to work the streets of Central alone?