LOS ANGELES POLICE COMMISSION

REVIEW OF KITROOM & CADET PROGRAM PROCEDURES

Conducted by the

OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL

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THE OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL
REVIEW OF KITROOM AND CADET PROGRAM PROCEDURES[1]

I.   INTRODUCTION

On June 14, 2017, Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD or Department) officers arrested three LAPD cadets for the theft of three Department vehicles and equipment. The subsequent investigation resulted in the arrest of seven other cadets for their involvement in the theft, and the arrest of an LAPD officer for sexually assaulting one of the arrested cadets. On June 26, 2017, the Board of Police Commissioners (Commission) directed the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) to conduct a review of the Department's kitroom and cadet program procedures.

To gather information for the review, OIG personnel met with officers assigned to the kitroom and the cadet program from 23 divisions.[2] Because this review focused on procedures rather than the specific actions of individual employees, the information presented relies on anecdotal information from those Department employees. In this report, the OIG presents anecdotes common to most, or at least multiple, divisions. Except when necessary to highlight an issue, the OIG avoided reporting outlier or single-occurring anecdotes. This review is not intended to be exhaustive in analysis or in identifying remedies for issues presented, but rather a cursory examination to allow for a more prompt initiation of any needed corrective actions.

II.   THE KITROOM

All patrol and traffic divisions utilize a "kitroom," which is a single room within the station, intended to be secure, for the storage of black and white police vehicle keys, shotguns, ROVERs,[3] TASERs (where not individually assigned), and replacement batteries for ROVERS and TASERs. The kitrooms also store occasionally-used items including hand-held battering rams and crime scene barrier tape, and replacement items including blank citation books. The main purpose of a kitroom is to provide equipment to field officers.

Assigned to each kitroom is a sworn employee whose primary function is to provide field officers with necessary equipment at the start of each watch, and to collect the equipment from the officers at the end of each watch. Ideally, the dispensing of equipment occurs quickly to allow officers prompt availability to respond to calls for service, and prompt collecting prevents officers from being held overtime. The secondary function of the kitroom officer is to properly log each item of dispensed equipment, identifying the receiving officer; upon return, each item should be logged as returned. The kitroom officer is required to record the dispensed and collected equipment in the Kitroom Inventory Tracking Systems (KITS), a digital database.

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[1] Police Special Investigators David Andrews and Florence Yu, and Police Performance Auditor III Lisa Ridoutt, Audit & Complaint Section, OIG. Editors: Police Performance Auditor IV John Grosdidier & Assistant Inspector General Kevin Rogan.

[2] The OIG contacted all Areas except Hollywood, West Valley, and 77th (77th, due to active investigation), all four traffic divisions, and Metropolitan Division. The OIG was initially unaware of cadet posts at Headquarters, Gateway Regional Post, University of Southern California, Loyola Marymount University, and Los Angeles World Airport Police.

[3] "Remote Out of Vehicle Emergency Radio." On August 6, 2017, the Department began permanently assigning ROVERS.

One officer is assigned to the kitroom at any given time, but that officer may also be assigned to conduct other duties after officers obtain equipment at start of watch (SOW) or return equipment at end of watch (EOW). However, when officers check out or return equipment at times other than SOW or EOW, the assigned kitroom officer may be away attending to other duties. Officers must then contact the watch commander for assistance with the equipment.

A.   Kitroom Issues

The OIG noted that all divisions followed the same general procedures in dispensing and retrieving equipment. The OIG identified several issues with kitroom function. Prior to publishing this report, the OIG met with the Office of Operations, which independently identified essentially the same problematic issues.

Kitroom Assignment - Because equipment check-out is a relatively low priority duty for a sworn officer, only some kitroom officers are assigned full-time to the duty. Most full-time kitroom officers have a permanent light-duty limitation preventing them from working the field. In some areas, officers with temporary light-duty status are assigned to the kitroom while the duty limitation lasts, then are replaced by another temporarily-limited officer.

No Kitroom Manual or Formal Training - There is no standardized kitroom manual. Most permanently assigned kitroom personnel referred to "Area Kitroom Procedures"[4] as the only Department source material for kitroom operations. Four divisions created their own kitroom guidelines, consisting of a posted checklist or readily accessible binder for kitroom procedures.

Training Division does not provide instruction for kitroom personnel. Most training coordinators and kitroom officers advised that kitroom procedures were comprised of "on the job training." Temporarily assigned officers generally were only somewhat familiar with kitroom procedures.

Kitroom Access & Security - Most areas identified the watch commander, training coordinator, and assigned kitroom officers as the only personnel with authorized kitroom access. All training coordinators said the kitroom was locked at all times. At multiple areas, one set of kitroom keys was left at the front desk for use when the assigned kitroom officer was unavailable. However, officers at several stations said the kitroom doors were occasionally propped open to allow access when the kitroom officer or keys were not available.

OIG personnel observed unauthorized officers enter or exit the kitroom when the kitroom officer was not present. In some instances, when the kitroom officer was not present and a field officer needed to check out equipment, the officer left a post-it note listing the equipment taken, with the understanding that the kitroom officer would later enter the data into KITS. In some instances when officers could not enter the kitroom and needed to return equipment, crates or rolling carts were provided for temporary equipment storage. This equipment was left in or near the watch commander's office or other areas where officers are generally present. Kitroom officers and

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[4] LAPD Office of Operations Order No. 2-2013, *Area Kitroom Procedures*, March 13, 2013.

training supervisors stated that leaving equipment unattended near the kitroom is prohibited as a practice, but several officers stated that it still occurs.

Most kitroom personnel requested Department ID for plainclothes personnel, if the kitroom officer did not recognize the employee. Uniformed officers were usually not requested to present ID, whether recognized or not.

KITS Access - Any officer can log onto KITS from any LAN terminal and enter or change data, including equipment checked in or out. KITS does not possess an audit function to identify who has accessed the system. KITS also does not possess a "time-out" function as other Department computer systems do, such as TEAMS and Evidence.com.

Vehicle Inventory Inspections - Only two divisions completed monthly vehicle inspections, consisting of walking the parking lot to confirm the presence of a Department vehicle. Only one division had a master list of its assigned vehicles. In most divisions, kitrooms only track patrol vehicles, while other work units maintain their own, non-patrol vehicle inventory lists.

Station Architecture - Thirteen of the 18 Area stations visited were built more than ten years ago. Older kitrooms with metal roll-down shutters were observed to be in poor condition, and occasional failure to shutter motors has resulted in the kitroom being left partly open. All kitrooms are accessible by metal key and most have been fitted with ID card readers. Some older card readers did not function or were programmed only for specific officer access. Most Area stations built within the last ten years have pass-through lockers installed in the kitroom wall, providing a secure storage point for the return of equipment without a kitroom officer present.[5]

B. Kitroom Recommendations

In making recommendations, the OIG focused on the kitroom's main purpose of providing equipment to facilitate the field officer's function. Inventory control and auditing, while important, cannot be so burdensome as to interfere with the officer's ability to promptly report to field duty, or to end the watch. Moreover, the OIG recognized that although gaps in inventory control may occur, providing equipment to sworn officers presumes an "honor system" component. In meeting with the Office of Operations (OO), the OIG learned that virtually all of these recommendations are already being undertaken, or are under consideration. The OO has invited the OIG to participate in a working group to further improve kitroom procedures.

1. Limit logon access to KITS to "right to know, need to know" employees, including kitroom officers, and only at specified computer workstations. An audit function should also be developed to identify employees logging onto KITS.

2. Require presentation of the Department ID card to obtain equipment. The ID card can be programmed so that scanning would autofill KITS fields for employee receiving or returning

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[5] Once equipment is placed into the locker, the officer closes the hallway-side locker door, which engages the lock mechanism. From that point, the returned equipment is accessible only from the kitroom interior.

equipment, time and date. Each item in the kitroom can be barcoded to autofill the specific item information into KITS. ID cards should also be used to gain access to kitrooms

3. Require physical inventory inspection of patrol vehicles at routine intervals (e.g., weekly, biweekly, or every deployment period). The available Automated Vehicle Locator System could be used to verify patrol vehicles deployed in the field.

4. Examine the feasibility of assigning a civilian cadre full-time to the kitroom.

III. THE CADET PROGRAM

A. Program History

The Explorer Program was established in 1962 to encourage the City's youth to work toward professional careers, particularly in law enforcement. Since then, to address differing community needs, the Department has developed multiple youth programs: the Cadet Program, Junior Cadet Program, Police Activities League, Jeopardy Program, Juvenile Impact Program, Police Orientation and Preparation Program, and Police Academy Magnet Program.

Effective January 1, 2010, the Department deactivated the Explorer Program and established the Youth Programs Unit (YPU), and the Cadet Program.[6] The YPU originally was assigned to the Office of Operations; in 2016, the YPU was moved to the Community Policing and Policy Group, in the Office of Constitutional Policing and Policy. The YPU is responsible for:

- exercising functional supervision over all Department personnel and civilian volunteers participating in the Police Cadet Program by providing information, training, evaluation, and auditing of policies and procedures;

- updating the Youth Programs Manual;

- maintaining a database of current and former police cadets;

- developing Cadet Program promotional material and opportunities;

- coordination and line supervision of the Cadet Academy;

- conducting the monthly Youth Service Officer (YSO) meeting; and,

- coordinating activities involving Cadet Posts from more than one geographic bureau.[7]

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[6] Office of the Chief of Police, Special Order No. 23-2010, *Police Explorer Program – Deactivated; and Police Cadet Program – Activated*, August 31, 2010.

[7] *Ibid.*

The OIG's review of the program found that YSOs were generally very positive about the program and were committed to doing their best. In some instances, YSOs described spending their own money to fund an activity, despite sometimes lengthy delays in reimbursement. The OIG notes that no YSOs have been identified as having any involvement in the June 14 incident. This portion of the report ends with recommendations that in some cases are drawn from the practices of other youth organizations or programs.

B.   Cadet Program Issues

The Community Policing and Policy Group (CPPG) assisted the OIG in conducting the Cadet Program review. As with the Kitroom, following the June 14 incident, the Department undertook an extensive review of the Cadet Program and subsequently has taken steps to address many of the issues cited here.

Outdated Manual - Since the transition to the Cadet Program in 2010, there were no revisions to the Youth Programs Manual (Manual) and it became effectively retired. With the absence of an effective written guide, the OIG found that Area YSOs improvised to run their programs, and consequently, each program varies somewhat in the activities undertaken and what information is provided to cadets. Since the June 14 incident, CPPG has prepared and released an updated Manual and requested the YSOs to provide feedback to improve the Manual.[8] The OIG reviewed the Manual and provided feedback to CPPG.

1.   YSO selection, training, and supervision

No Standardized YSO Selection Process - Department policy directs that commanding officers shall appoint two sworn YSOs, and "should" consider seven factors in appointing.[9] There are no other minimum requirements or testing for YSO selection.

Lack of YSO Training - There is no specific mandatory training provided or required before a YSO is given supervisory responsibility over cadets. YSOs are required to attend monthly meetings where the YPU may provide training, but there is no YSO training curriculum and no mandatory continuing education or certification. As part of their interactions with cadets, YSOs may provide academic assistance and tutoring and personal counseling (including issues of sexual behavior and contact), but have no structured training or required credentialing.

Minimal YSO Supervision - The Area Community Relations Unit, Officer-in-Charge (OIC), has direct supervisory responsibility over YSOs.[10] The OIG found that some YSOs and their OIC did not align their days off schedule and so would report to the Senior Lead Officer, who

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[8] LAPD Youth Programs Manual (Updated August 2017).

[9] Department Manual, Volume 3, Section 245.50, *Police Cadet Program*. The seven factors: tenure, maturity, work history, administrative skills, oral and written communication skills, flexibility, and commitment.

[10] Youth Manual, *supra* note 8, at Volume II, Section 160.15, *Area Community Relations Unit.*

has a variety of other responsibilities. As a result, YSOs appear to have very limited actual supervision.

YSO to Cadet Communication - The Manual allows YSOs to utilize social media, including texting, to contact cadets.[11] All YSOs are provided with Department-issued phones, which are to be used for any texting contacts. The policy precludes ("shall not") the use of social media for "personal or intimate" communication, but does not require that in all cases ("shall, when possible") a second, approved person be added to any social media communication. The OIG noted that Boy Scouts of America (BSA) prohibits social media contact, including email, between leaders and scouts, and BSA requires all in-person contacts to have a second approved person present.

Cadet to YSO Ratio - The ratio, or span of control, between cadets and YSOs varied at each post, but was as high as 60 cadets to 1 YSO during classroom lessons and physical fitness training. The Manual provides span of control guidelines for cadet activities, including 35 to1 for class, and 30 to 1 for fitness.[12] The only mandatory ratio is for overnight trips, where no more than 10 cadets may be supervised by 1 YSO of the same sex.[13]

The OIG reviewed manuals from other youth programs for comparison. The Los Angeles Sheriff's Department Explorer Program mandates a ratio of no more than 10 explorers to 1 adult leader in any situation. The BSA requires a maximum ratio of 40 youth to 2 adult leaders in classroom settings. The Girl Scouts of Greater Los Angeles requires a maximum 15-to-1 ratio for 9th to 12th graders in a classroom setting and a maximum 10-to-1 ratio for other activities.

2.   Financial matters

The Department provides financial support to the Cadet Program solely by paying YSO salaries.[14] All cadet activities and events are funded entirely through donations, and each Area Post must engage in their own fundraising. Donations are received from individuals and non-profit organizations, and received in return for cadet staffing at events of the Dodgers and the Hollywood Bowl. YPU has entered into verbal agreements with the Dodgers, the Hollywood Bowl, and a few smaller venues to provide cadet staffing at venue events. These events provide the bulk of funding for each Area Post's activities.

Each Area Post must provide a number of cadets to least four venue events. In 2017, there will be "nearly 80" dates at Dodger Stadium where cadets will handout free souvenirs.[15] Each date

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[11] *Ibid,* Volume I, Section 125, *Social Media.*

[12] *Ibid*, Volume I, Section 300, *Span of Control.*

[13] *Ibid*, Volume II, Section 205.15, *Supervision of Cadet Overnight Trips.*

[14] LAPD, *Cadet Program Top-to-Bottom Review*, August 4, 2017, at 21.

[15] *Ibid*, at 18.

requires 90 to 120 cadets. Cadets hand out souvenirs, beginning at 4:00 p.m. and remaining until one-hour after the first pitch, or about 8:00 p.m. The Dodgers donate $30 per cadet (or about $7.50 per hour) for handing out game-day souvenirs. The Hollywood Bowl event requires at least eight cadets, for six hours, to inform the public where parking is prohibited. In turn, the Bowl donates $400 to the Area Post (or, $8.33 per hour per cadet).

Financial donations, usually received as checks, are forwarded to Fiscal Operations Division (FOD) for deposit into a Department Trust Fund. Before the funds are released to the Area Post for spending, the donation must be approved.

Donation Approval Process - The Area YSO must submit a memorandum to the Area Commanding Officer (CO) describing the donation amount and source, and request the CO's approval and forwarding to Administrative Services Bureau (ASB). The ASB CO must then approve the donation and forward it for approval by the Commission. Once the Commission approves the donation, FOD then deposits the check into the Area's account. At best, the approval process takes several weeks, and at times may even take several months, before Area Posts can use the funds for activities. Some YSOs said they have paid for events with their own money (and were later reimbursed) because of the delay in having access to funds.

Boosters - Some Area Posts do not need fundraising activity because they have community "boosters" raise money for the Post. Boosters work with the Area Community Relations Office (CRO). In some instances, FOD is aware of funds requested from boosters because the Area will submit a Receipts and Disbursement form documenting the activity. In other instances, a YSO can bypass the process by going directly to the boosters to request funds. YSOs who have access to boosters prefer this process because of the immediate access to funds for cadet activities.

While this approach does streamline funding, it is unclear whether boosters are vetting donors. Moreover, because these accounts are outside the purview of FOD, the Department is unable to determine whether funds are properly used. Such accounts have no restrictions on how the funds must be used, and in some instances, allow for funds from one youth program to intermingle with funds of another youth program. Department policies do not apply to boosters, and Department employees may only participate in an advisory capacity.[16]

Purchasing Cards - In 2016, the Department began the use of Purchasing Cards, or "P-Cards." P-Cards act like debit cards, allowing for the immediate access to funds existing in Area Post accounts. There have been several problems with P-Cards. Because each P-Card is printed with the name of the Area Post rather than in the name of a person, some businesses or venues do not accept them. Some area businesses accept only cash, and Department policy limits Posts to having only $100 in "petty cash" funds available.[17] After petty cash is exhausted, it may only be

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[16] Department Manual Volume 3, Section 350.32, *Area Booster Funds*. Area booster funds shall be administered by members of the community selected by the concerned booster organizations. The commanding officer and the community relations officer of the Area shall participate in the administration of Area booster funds in an advisory capacity only.

[17] *Ibid,* at Volume 3, Section 350.14, *Bookkeeping System.*

replenished by writing a check against the fund account.

To transition from Receipts and Disbursement accounts to P-Card Accounts, the Department directed that before a Post could implement use of the P-Card, the Post had to first spend down and exhaust any funds existing in any separate checking account maintained by the Post. That appears to have resulted in at least a few Posts spending heavily to exhaust the separate checking accounts, and there has been no auditing of that spending. Last, the P-Card system does nothing to speed up access to funds donated, but not yet approved.

Economic Disparity Between Area Posts **-** Some Areas raise more money than others due to population distribution and socioeconomic differences. For example, on July 17, 2017, the Devonshire Area Post, which has no boosters, had $26.20 in its P-Card account. In contrast, the Topanga Area Post had over $10,000 in their booster account, as well as over $2,000 in its P-Card account. The types of activities Devonshire cadets could experience would likely differ from the types available to Topanga cadets. The OIG noted that the Manual does not identify a controlling policy for the task of insuring some level of equity in the cadet experience across all posts, while still keeping an incentive for Area boosters to support their local Posts.

3. Cadet activities and records

No Post-Academy Curriculum **-** Prior to being assigned to an Area Cadet Post, all cadet recruits must attend the Cadet Academy, which has a structured curriculum. After completing the academy, cadets spend the remainder of their time in the program at an assigned Area Post. Cadets are required to maintain "active" status by attending Area Post events, but there is no YPU-approved central curriculum identifying what training, programs, activities, or community service must be completed as part of the cadet experience. Each Area designs its own program, with the result that no two Areas offer the same experience to cadets.

4. Records, parental approval, and insurance

Inconsistent Area Post Record-Keeping **-** The OIG found that most Areas maintained files, but there appeared to be inconsistencies about where the files were kept and how long files were retained. Each Area Post will be required to maintain a personnel file for each cadet and to retain all files until the cadet turns 25 years of age. Cadet attendance at meetings and activities (sign-in and sign-out logs) must be retained for three years.

Parental Consent Forms **-** The Manual refers to a "Cadet Pick-Up Form" which requires completion to approve early departure from the Academy. Recruits are only released to a parent or guardian with identification and vehicle information. The OIG suggests a similar form for all cadets would be appropriate for pick up/release from the Area Station after a post meeting or event. Once signed, the form could be maintained in the cadet's file.

The OIG found that after the initial parental consent to join the Cadet Program, few Posts obtained additional parental permission for participation in specific events or activities. The OIG

suggests it is appropriate to inform parents or guardians of the activities their minor or adult children are participating in, and to obtain signed permission for the cadet to participate.

Cadet Activity Report - The OIG learned that the Cadet Activity Report established in 2011 was no longer being used. Additionally, cadet sign-in sheets have not been consistently utilized or retained at each Area. The OIG noted that both issues have been addressed in the updated Manual.

Incomplete Insurance Coverage - The OIG found that a City insurance policy provides coverage for cadets for certain injuries sustained while performing their duties in the scope of an authorized volunteer assignment, or during volunteer training sessions and under the direction of the City. The coverage applies only if the volunteer has no insurance or acts as supplemental insurance to any other insurance available to the volunteer. The coverage does not extend to injuries sustained during extracurricular or recreational activities such as off-site trips, picnics, dances, banquets, etc. The OIG believes that such coverage for youth activities is available (e.g., PAL program insurance).

C. Cadet Program Recommendations

Based upon the review of the Cadet Program, the OIG makes the below recommendations. For several of these recommendations, the OIG is aware that the Department independently identified the same issues and already has initiated action.

1. Develop specific criteria for YSO selection.

2. Develop an introductory YSO training curriculum, and explore including counseling and teaching skills components.

3. Examine other youth programs and re-evaluate whether one-to-one communication is acceptable, and limit and define specific acceptable social media.

4. Examine adherence to specific span of control numbers, and require YPU approval for any exceptions.

5. Examine whether Cadet Program donations can be approved in a streamlined process.

6. Convene a workgroup to examine the boosters' role in the Cadet Program.

7. Solicit input from the Controller's Office, ASB, and FOD on how to address P-Card problems.

8. Consider impacts of financial disparity, and methods to promote uniformity in cadet experience across all Area Posts.

9. Develop specific post-academy curriculum, while still affording Area Post flexibility.

10. Enforce compliance with new Manual policies regarding cadet record-keeping and use of the Cadet Activity Report.

11. Update forms to ensure parental approval records are current for all activities.

12. Examine alternative providers for enhanced cadet insurance coverage.