

## INTRADEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE

July 11, 2014  
12.3

**TO:** The Honorable Board of Police Commissioners

**FROM:** Chief of Police

**SUBJECT:** RECOMMENDATION FOR THE POLICE COMMISSION UNIT CITATION

### RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. That the Board of Police Commissioners award the Police Commission Unit Citation to all Department and partnering law enforcement agency personnel who comprised the "Chosen Few" collaborative Task Force.

Lieutenant John Jenal, Serial No. 23703, 77th Street Area  
Sergeant Arthur Bedard, Serial No. 26939, Hollywood Area  
Detective Carter Fenstemacher, Serial No. 32641, Southeast Area  
Officer Paul Avila, Serial No. 34754, Southeast Area  
Officer Brett Clark, Serial No. 34459, Southeast Area  
Sergeant James Doull, Serial No. 35993, Central Area  
Officer Billy Lee, Serial No. 37742, Southeast Area  
Officer Oscar Ontiveros, Serial No. 35946, Southeast Area  
Officer Ralph Campos, Serial No. 33975, Southeast Area  
Officer Clinton Harrell, Serial No. 37936, North Hollywood Area  
Officer Felicia Robinson, Serial No. 38019, Southeast Area  
Officer Manuel Sierra, Serial No. 36102, North Hollywood Area  
Officer Rene Silva, Serial No. 37006, Southeast Area  
Special Agent Dan Thompson, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives  
Special Agent Hercules Fandino, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives  
Investigator Veronica Alvarez, California Department of Motor Vehicles  
Deputy City Attorney Jule Bishop, Los Angeles City Attorney's Office  
Paralegal Haydee Capdet, Los Angeles City Attorney's Office

### DISCUSSION

It is recommended that the Honorable Board of Police Commissioners award the Police Commission Unit Citation to Southeast Area and partnering agency personnel for the "Chosen Few" collaborative Task Force for their dedication in the removal of the outlaw "Chosen Few Motorcycle Club" from Southeast Area.

On June 13, 2013, the Honorable Mark Mooney issued a ruling in Los Angeles County Superior Court that closed a chapter on an innovative law enforcement task force investigation which ultimately spanned five states and included representatives from nine different law enforcement agencies. The successful inter-agency cooperation and teamwork resulted in the removal of the headquarters of the Outlaw Motorcycle Gang (OMG) known as the "Chosen Few Motorcycle Club" (Chosen Few) from Southeast Area and the prosecution of many of the gang's core members for serious criminal violations.

The Chosen Few has been a fixture of the predominantly African-American biker scene in South Los Angeles for over 50 years. Founded in 1960 amidst the Civil Rights movement, the criminal activities of the Chosen Few were often obscured by tumultuous events of that era. Shootings and stabbings associated with Chosen Few were lost within the spike in violent crime statistics that accompanied the rise of traditional street gangs in South Los Angeles during the 1970's and 80's. The Chosen Few rapidly expanded and opened multiple chapters throughout the Southwestern United States. Their Los Angeles based founding chapter, or "Mother Chapter," made its home within the current patrol boundaries of Los Angeles Police Department's (LAPD) Southeast Area.

Settling into a commercial building on the corner of 108th Street and Broadway in 1981, the Chosen Few "Mother Chapter" clubhouse became a haven for overflowing and non-permitted parties, with motorcycles often parked all around the street and sidewalks. Fights among members were frequent, and shootings and stabbings soon followed. Chosen Few members used the motorcycle club as a network to distribute narcotics throughout the United States. Archival searches of LAPD arrest records revealed a Chosen Few member was arrested for PCP distribution in 1975. Extremely telling is that Chosen Few as an entity, not an individual name, was listed as the arrestee's emergency point of contact, with the phone number given belonging to the Chosen Few clubhouse. Similarly, bail receipts record the entity posting bond for the jailed member as the Chosen Few.

Violence also surrounded the Chosen Few and members frequently posed for pictures holding automatic weapons, including Uzi sub-machine guns, shotguns, and knives. Beginning in 2000, violence began to escalate for the Chosen Few. In March 2000, Chosen Few member Lawrence Madison, aka "Buck," kidnapped a young man walking past the Chosen Few clubhouse and tied him to a post inside using telephone cord. Madison believed that the victim was an associate of area street gang members who had shot a Chosen Few member at the clubhouse several hours earlier. Members took turns beating the victim with a 2x4 piece of wood before Madison slashed the victim's face with a knife. The victim was eventually released, but not before Madison warned him that the scar on his face would make him remember not to cross the Chosen Few.

In November 2002, uniformed Southeast Area patrol officers responded to a shooting at a party at the Chosen Few clubhouse. A man involved in the shooting who pointed a handgun at police officers, prompting the officers to fire in self-defense, fled through the clubhouse and disappeared. No suspect was ever identified despite the presence of more than 50 witnesses.

In May 2006, a woman waiting in line to enter a non-permitted party at the Chosen Few clubhouse was shot and killed. Chosen Few members who did not want the murder to draw attention to their activities dragged the body down the sidewalk away from their clubhouse. In April 2010, uniformed Southeast Area officers arrested the Chosen Few Sergeant-at-Arms when they observed him shooting a gun in the air to break up a fight within the parking area of the Chosen Few clubhouse.

A plan was formed in May 2010, to bolster the Southeast Area Vice Unit by adding a detective supervisor to the unit's table and to enact a task force strategy with federal and state law enforcement partners to impact the rise in violence attributed to the Chosen Few. The plan would address violent crime and illegal firearms and narcotics sales by individual Chosen Few members and enforcement of all applicable Alcoholic Beverage Control permitting and Los Angeles Municipal Code sections on the Chosen Few "Mother Chapter" clubhouse.

Southeast Area Detective Carter Fenstemacher, deputized as a Task Force Officer with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF), joined the unit in June 2010, and immediately began conducting joint field operations with LAPD and ATF resources. He conducted interviews with Confidential Informants (CI) to outline a local and national hierarchal structure of Chosen Few and identify Chosen Few members involved in illegal firearms and narcotics sales. A clear picture was established that illustrated that the Chosen Few was operating as an OMG, an organization whose members use the motorcycle club as a means to conduct criminal activities. For years Chosen Few members had used the OMG to distribute narcotics and funneled those funds, along with proceeds from non-permitted parties and illegal alcohol sales, into purchases of property, including their "Mother Chapter" clubhouse. The allure of their outlaw reputation made it easy to recruit members and based on their sheer numbers and willingness to carry weapons and use violence, Chosen Few established itself as the dominant African-American OMG in South Los Angeles.

In order to recover evidence to establish proof of this ongoing criminal enterprise and its participants, Detective Fenstemacher began using CI to conduct controlled purchases of narcotics from the Chosen Few clubhouse. These controlled narcotics purchases were used as the basis of probable cause for a series of search warrants that were executed on the clubhouse during peak times. The Southeast Area Vice Unit deliberately chose to execute search warrants when Chosen Few held mandatory meetings and parties to maximize the likelihood of recovery of business records, phone rosters, membership information, and contraband, including firearms and narcotics.

Detective Fenstemacher placed Chosen Few members targeted for investigation into law enforcement databases and was quickly contacted by a United States Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) agent, who had identified a Chosen Few member using the United States Postal Service to transport large amounts of cocaine from Los Angeles to Virginia. A controlled delivery in Virginia resulted in the seizure of over one kilogram of powder cocaine and the arrest and indictment of Chosen Few member James Melvin Gray for narcotics trafficking.

The use of CI to conduct undercover investigations and controlled purchases of evidence was critical to providing the Southeast Area Vice Unit with an inside view into the ongoing criminal activities of Chosen Few and building cases for the prosecution of individual members. One CI became familiar with a Chosen Few member named Senecca Terrell who acted as a broker for sales of cocaine, firearms, and California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) fraud. On January 11, 2011, Terrell arranged to sell the CI an AR-15 assault rifle in exchange for \$1,000. To complete the deal, Terrell needed to bring the CI and Chosen Few associate Maurice Sampson, a convicted felon and PCP smuggler who currently owned the rifle, to the residence of Chosen Few member Kenneth Smith, who was holding the rifle for Sampson. The Southeast Area Vice Unit formed a tactical plan to conduct a rolling surveillance of the CI and Terrell from the Chosen Few clubhouse in Southeast Area to Smith's residence in Baldwin Village. The plan compartmentalized responsibilities for each member of the task force to ensure the highest degree of safety for both the CI and law enforcement investigating motorcycle gang members who were armed felons while simultaneously gathering critical evidence for future prosecution.

Detective Fenstemacher and ATF Special Agents Dan Thompson and Hercules Fandino equipped the CI with a hidden audio and video recording device and a live one-way transmitter. This allowed Detective Fenstemacher to hear all conversations between the CI and Terrell in real-time and to relay their activities to the surveillance team. Sergeant Arthur Bedard coordinated both the vice officers participating as undercover surveillance assets, as well as the uniformed team which would react to protect the CI and police officers if the operation became life-threatening at any time. Lieutenant John Jenal maintained oversight of the entire operation. The surveillance team, comprised of Southeast Area Vice Officers Oscar Ontiveros, Paul Avila, Brett Clark, Clinton Harrell, Felicia Robinson, Billy Lee, Manuel Sierra, and Rene Silva, followed the CI, Terrell, and Sampson to Baldwin Village where Smith entered the vehicle and directed them to pull into an alley with access to Smith's garage. Officers Harrell and Robinson discreetly positioned themselves in an alley where they could see Smith and Terrell enter the garage, then return to the vehicle holding an object that appeared to be a rifle and placing it inside the vehicle. This observation later proved critical in court to securing a conviction of Smith for unlawful possession and sale of an assault weapon.

Simultaneously, Detective Fenstemacher and Special Agents Thompson and Fandino heard the successful recording of the CI counting the money to Terrell and Sampson to complete the illegal exchange. Upon completion of the surveillance, Detective Fenstemacher and Special Agents Thompson and Fandino recovered the illegally purchased AR-15 assault rifle from the CI which was key evidence in the prosecution of Terrell, Sampson, and Smith. This transaction was also critical in proving the gang allegation because it showed Chosen Few members openly working together to engage in illegal firearms sales for profit. During all of the CI operations, the Southeast Area Vice Unit, including task force Special Agents Thompson and Fandino, displayed the same degree of planning, teamwork, communication, competency with technical electronic recording devices, expertise in undercover operations and surveillance, and tactical acumen necessary to maximize safety while gathering productive investigative leads.

On May 3, 2011, Detective Fenstemacher observed former Chosen Few National President Byron Mitchell attempting to conceal contraband in a vehicle parked in front of the Chosen Few clubhouse. Detective Fenstemacher established an observation post on Mitchell while Southeast Area Vice units directed by Lieutenant Jenal deployed quickly from traditional vice enforcement along the Figueroa Street Corridor. Containment of the streets surrounding the Chosen Few clubhouse was quickly established and a situational and tactical briefing given via police radio. Detective Fenstemacher monitored Mitchell until he drove away from the clubhouse with the suspicious contraband in his vehicle. Officers Billy Lee, Rene Silva, and Ralph Campos followed Mitchell in a marked black-and-white police vehicle and observed Mitchell make multiple vehicle code infractions, at which point a traffic stop was conducted. Detective Fenstemacher contacted Mitchell and detected the strong odor of PCP emanating from his vehicle. Officers conducted a search of Mitchell's vehicle and recovered one gallon of phencyclidine (PCP) concealed in a water jug.

Detective Fenstemacher built rapport with Mitchell throughout the investigation. As a result, Mitchell gave consent to Fenstemacher to search his residence in Carson. The Southeast Area Vice Unit formed a tactical plan and quickly responded to Mitchell's home where Mitchell directed officers to three handguns and numerous pieces of Chosen Few gang paraphernalia. Working as a team and searching methodically, officers also recovered cellular phones and bank records which became key pieces of evidence in the investigation of Mitchell's interstate narcotics trafficking. Working with DEA Special Agents in Detroit, an additional six gallons of PCP were recovered, which had been shipped there by Mitchell for distribution in the Detroit and Chicago areas. Exhaustive debriefing of Mitchell by Detective Fenstemacher and DEA revealed a 30-year history of narcotics trafficking by Mitchell using Chosen Few and other predominantly African-American motorcycle clubs as a distribution network across the country.

The search of Mitchell's residence was one of 15 searches of properties including the Chosen Few clubhouse, residences, or businesses, conducted pursuant to search warrants during this investigation. Special Agents from ATF, DEA, Los Angeles County Probation, and DMV, participated intermittently in these searches. Also, ATF Special Agents Thompson and Fandino participated in every search with Southeast Area Vice Unit as part of the task force. Lieutenant Jenal mitigated differing tactical training among law enforcement agencies by assigning the various law enforcement agents to investigative functions led by Detective Fenstemacher. While he maintained oversight of search operations, Sergeant Bedard directed Southeast Area Vice Unit Sergeant James Doull, and Officers Ontiveros, Avila, Clark, Lee, Harrell, Campos, Sierra, and Robinson during tactical entries. All Southeast Area Vice Unit supervisors and officers demonstrated tactical superiority and extreme patience and communication skills to safely and effectively deal simultaneously with numerous suspects who needed to be detained, searched, interviewed, and monitored during lengthy investigative searches.

Throughout the investigation, Detective Fenstermacher cultivated partnerships with other law enforcement agencies impacted by Chosen Few members including the DEA, Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, California Department of Justice and DMV. Early in 2011, DMV Investigator Veronica Alvarez identified Chosen Few member Brian Petetan, a DMV employee who was using his access to DMV computer systems to create fraudulent identities. These fraudulent identities were suspected of having been used to illegally purchase firearms. To build a criminal case against Petetan, Southeast Area Vice Unit used a CI engaged in an act of DMV fraud with Petetan. Under the supervision of the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office, Public Integrity Division, DMV Investigator Alvarez created a fictitious target identity in the DMV database which Petetan would alter in exchange for cash from the CI.

On May 12, 2011, a field operation was coordinated between Southeast Area Vice Unit and investigators from the DMV, led by Investigator Alvarez. A meticulous tactical plan was developed and briefed among the officers and DMV investigators. A CI met with Chosen Few member Senecca Terrell who had conspired with Petetan to engage in DMV fraud. Again, in true testament to the surveillance expertise, teamwork, and communication of the Southeast Area Vice Unit, the surveillance team followed the CI and Terrell from Terrell's residence in South Los Angeles to the DMV office in Culver City. The DMV investigative team led by Investigator Alvarez gathered the evidence they needed as Terrell provided cash to Petetan, who in turn accessed the DMV databases to conduct DMV fraud.

In the early morning hours of July 14, 2011, law enforcement officers from several LAPD divisions, ATF, DEA, the United States Marshal's Service, DMV, and Los Angeles County Probation, conducted a joint search and arrest warrant operation. There were nine target locations spread throughout South Los Angeles and as far as Fresno, California. Lieutenant Jenal and Detective Fenstermacher conducted a briefing for team leaders and command staff from all participating agencies. The operation was a success and nine of 10 suspects sought were in custody and further evidence of criminal activity was recovered including narcotics, 12 firearms, and numerous items of gang paraphernalia.

A joint press conference publicized the investigation and introduced LAPD's new enforcement posture regarding outlaw motorcycle gangs and their clubhouses in South Los Angeles. The press conference also set the stage to unveil a unique strategy enforced by the Los Angeles City Attorney's Office which would cripple Chosen Few's ability to operate in South Los Angeles as they had done so brazenly for more than 50 years. The final step toward a reduction in violence associated with Chosen Few was to remove their clubhouse as a location to plan and carry out criminal activity.

Deputy City Attorney Jule Bishop assigned to the Los Angeles City Attorney's Office Citywide Nuisance Abatement Program worked side-by-side with the Southeast Area Vice Unit throughout the investigation. Deputy City Attorney Bishop reviewed all reports and evidence produced during the task force investigation, along with historical crime reports and statistics regarding the Chosen Few "Mother Chapter" clubhouse. Working tirelessly, she crafted

them into a civil action against the Chosen Few as an entity. As the criminal investigation proceeded, Deputy City Attorney Bishop and Los Angeles City Attorney's Office Paralegal Haydee Capdet did more than simply review crime reports, they conducted exhaustive research of real estate transactions and bank accounts to determine ownership and operational management responsibility for the clubhouse property.

Armed with the signed stipulations from Chosen Few defendants, Deputy City Attorney Bishop drafted a motion for default judgment and injunction which was accepted by the Court. Based on the strength of the law enforcement investigation and Deputy City Attorney Bishop's masterful articulation, the Court granted a 10-year prohibition against Chosen Few, preventing them from operating a clubhouse in the City of Los Angeles for the maximum allowable period of 10 years. The Court's grant of a 10-year shut down supported the task force's allegation that the property was a safe haven for drug sales, gun sales, and unrestrained violence.

The operational period of the "Chosen Few" collaborative Task Force investigation began with the first field operations in June, 2010, with the final arrest warrant operation on July 14, 2011. Criminal prosecutions of Chosen Few members resulting from this investigation lasted through the final days of December, 2012. During that period, over 18 Chosen Few members were convicted by guilty pleas and jury verdicts for crimes ranging from murder and interstate narcotics trafficking to street sales of firearms, drugs and assault. Sentences handed down ranged from formal probation to 42 years in state prison.

The Southeast Area Vice Unit "Chosen Few" collaborative Task Force significantly impacted violent crime connected to motorcycle gangs in South Los Angeles. Following the publicized investigation and take-down, Southeast Area experienced a one-year period from March 2012 to March 2013, where there was not a single motorcycle gang-related violent crime incident reported in the division.

The success of this operation and resulting positive impact to the community in Southeast Area would not have been possible without the teamwork displayed by all of the law enforcement agencies participating in the task force. This is a true credit to the professionalism of each agency and its representatives to act with humility and esprit-de-corps in pursuit of a common goal.

Should you have any questions, please contact Deputy Chief Mark Perez, Personnel and Training Bureau, at (213) 486-7090.

Respectfully,



CHARLIE BECK  
Chief of Police