

Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-0535

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July 21, 2021

The Honorable Merrick Garland  
Attorney General  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20530

The Honorable Kristen Clarke  
Assistant Attorney General  
Civil Rights Division  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Attorney General Garland and Assistant Attorney General Clarke:

I write to ask that the United States Department of Justice (DOJ) take action to address the reported existence of a rogue, violent gang of law enforcement officials, who call themselves the "Executioners," operating within the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department (LASD), specifically the LASD Compton Sheriff's Station (Compton station). Specifically, I ask that the DOJ take two immediate actions: launch an independent investigation into the existence of the "Executioners", both at the LASD Compton station and within the greater LASD community, and launch a pattern or practice investigation into the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department for potential civil rights and constitutional violations.

In a legal matter regarding an excessive use of force case against Los Angeles County, an LASD deputy provided sworn testimony identifying more than a dozen deputies with matching tattoos symbolizing their association with the Executioners gang.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, the deputy filed a separate whistleblower complaint against LASD in June, further documenting the Executioners abhorrent, violent behavior.<sup>2</sup> Deputies at the LASD Compton station reportedly "chase ink", a slang term for a deputy who attempts to win favor with the Executioners by committing violent acts in hopes of receiving the group tattoo denoting gang membership.<sup>3</sup> The gang allegedly sets illegal arrest quotas, threatens and harasses fellow deputies, and holds parties after shootings,

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<sup>1</sup> Spectrum News, August 30, 2020, Found at <https://spectrumnews1.com/ca/la-west/public-safety/2020/08/30/whistleblower-testifies-deputy-who-shot-gardena-teen-was--chasing-ink-->

<sup>2</sup> Id.

<sup>3</sup> Id.

called ‘998 parties,’ which are in part a celebration that a new deputy will be inked by the gang.<sup>4</sup> The tattoos worn by the police gang reportedly feature Nazi imagery.<sup>5</sup>

The whistleblower’s sworn testimony asserted that the existence of the Executioners gang is “common knowledge” at the station, and that the gang’s alleged leader controlled and manipulated the work schedule to boost arrest numbers.<sup>6</sup>

In disturbing evidence of the violence perpetrated against the Los Angeles community by the LASD gang, the whistleblower identified the two deputies responsible for the death of Andres Guardado, a Gardena, California teenager killed by police on June 18, 2020, as members of the Executioners.<sup>7</sup>

According to multiple reports, the two LASD Compton deputies chased Andres, who was working as a security guard at an auto body shop in Gardena, into an alley in the rear of a building where they shot him five times in the back, killing him.<sup>8</sup> While the deputies claimed they saw him with a gun, and a pistol that hadn’t been fired was found at the scene, authorities were unable to clarify whether Andres ever aimed the gun at deputies, or even who possessed and owned the firearm.<sup>9</sup> The owner of the auto body shop reported that several cameras at the scene, including a digital video recorder that stored surveillance footage, were seized and destroyed by police.<sup>10</sup>

The killing of Andres Guardado is not the only example of the LASD’s excessive and brutal tactics in the Los Angeles community. On August 31, 2020, LASD deputies fatally shot Dijon Kizzee in South Los Angeles. The deputies allege that Kizzee was riding a bicycle “in violation of vehicle codes,” and approached him. He ran, and the deputies allege he had a gun on his person. They opened fire, without any evidence that the gun was being used in a threatening manner. Officials investigating the shooting recently confirmed that Kizzee had been fired upon an astounding 19 times.<sup>11</sup> Though neither deputy was wearing a body camera,<sup>12</sup> cell phone footage showed Kizzee running from the deputies at the time he was fired upon 19 times.<sup>13</sup> A man is now dead, and the only explanation given as to why the conflict began was that the victim was riding a bicycle incorrectly.

Further, in May of 2020, when Christopher Bailey was on his way home from work in Inglewood, California, he was pulled over for an alleged traffic violation, and was subsequently

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<sup>4</sup> Id.

<sup>5</sup> Los Angeleno, Found at <https://losangeleno.com/features/lasd-whistleblower-executioners/>

<sup>6</sup> Id.

<sup>7</sup> Id.

<sup>8</sup> CNN, July 1, 2020. Found at <https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/30/us/andres-guardado-shooting-los-angeles-deputies/index.html>

<sup>9</sup> International Business Times, June 20, 2020. Found at <https://www.ibtimes.sg/andres-guardado-cops-who-killed-teenage-security-guard-destroyed-cctv-cameras-seized-video-footage-47156>

<sup>10</sup> Id.

<sup>11</sup> CNN, September 17, 2020. Found at <https://www.cnn.com/2020/09/18/us/dijon-kizzee-los-angeles-shooting-investigation/index.html>

<sup>12</sup> CNN, September 2, 2020, Found at <https://www.cnn.com/2020/09/01/us/los-angeles-police-shooting/index.html>

<sup>13</sup> CNN, September 17, 2020. Found at <https://www.cnn.com/2020/09/18/us/dijon-kizzee-los-angeles-shooting-investigation/index.html>

brutally beaten by LASD deputies.<sup>14</sup> It is alleged that Christopher Bailey sustained between 64 and 86 hits to his body, with about 35 to 44 hits to his face.<sup>15</sup> While seven deputies were allegedly beating Bailey, he feared that he may not live to see another day. His teeth were knocked out, bones in his face were shattered, and doctors say the punches to his eye were so severe that it dislodged his eyeball.<sup>16</sup> Recent cell phone video footage filmed after he was beaten shows Bailey being lifted into an ambulance and a bystander stating, “he doesn’t even look human.”<sup>17</sup> While we do not yet know if the deputies in this alleged beating associate with extremist organizations, their conduct is part of a clear, brutal pattern of violence by LASD.

My concerns also extend beyond LASD, as a pattern of police associating with militant groups nationwide has emerged. In June 2020, four police officers based in San Jose were suspended after their participation in a racist Facebook group was discovered. One officer posted, in response to the Black Lives Matter protests, that “Black lives really don’t matter,” while another officer’s post, in response to an image of a Muslim woman, wrote “I say re-purpose the hijabs into nooses.”<sup>18</sup> Further, in the summer of 2020, an Orange County, California based law enforcement officer was caught wearing patches affiliated with right-wing extremist and white supremacist groups.<sup>19</sup>

These killings, and the abhorrent accusations regarding gangs operating within the LASD and the greater state of California, are a tragic continuation of the longstanding relationship between extremist, militant, and white supremacist groups and the police.<sup>20</sup>

For example, in Los Angeles County, police historically turned a blind eye to, or even participated in, the existence of “sundown towns,” which were localities that prohibited African Americans from remaining in the area after sunset.<sup>21</sup> These racist policies were found throughout Southern California: “Brea, Chico, Culver City, El Segundo, Fresno, Glendale, Hawthorne, La Holla, Palmdale, San Marino, and Taft” were all confirmed “sundown towns,” and other localities, including Compton and Inglewood, prohibited any Blacks from moving into the neighborhood.<sup>22</sup> Only a few generations removed from adopting “sundown town” policies, Compton is now the epicenter of an LASD station the Compton mayor described as responsible for “terrorizing” the community.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> ABC News, June 21, 2021, Found at <https://abc7.com/la-county-sheriffs-department-police-brutality-investigation-christopher-bailey-civil-rights-lawsuit/10818168/>

<sup>15</sup> Id.

<sup>16</sup> Id.

<sup>17</sup> Id.

<sup>18</sup> CNN, June 30, 2020. Found at: <https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/30/us/san-jose-officers-racist-posts/index.html>

<sup>19</sup> Insider, Found at <https://www.insider.com/orange-county-cop-spotted-with-right-wing-extremist-patches-2020-6>

<sup>20</sup> Historian Linda Gordon, discussing *The Second Coming of the KKK: The Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s and the American Political Tradition*, Found at <https://www.c-span.org/video/?457949-1/influence-1920s-klk-politics-culture>.

<sup>21</sup> LA Sentinel, September 3, 2020, Found at <https://lasentinel.net/the-california-towns-where-blacks-feared-sundown.html>

<sup>22</sup> Id.

<sup>23</sup> LAist, Found at <https://laist.com/latest/post/20200804/Compton-Mayor-Aja-Brown-LA-County-Sheriff's-Department-Harassment>

Despite the official end of “sundown towns,” Los Angeles area law enforcement’s affiliation with militants continued. In Lynwood, California, the community adjacent to Compton, residents filed a class action civil rights lawsuit in the 1990s alleging that a gang of militant LASD deputies “perpetrated ‘systematic acts of shooting, killing, brutality, terrorism, house-trashing and other acts of lawlessness and wanton abuse of power.’”<sup>24</sup> The police gang responsible was called the “Lynwood Vikings,”<sup>25</sup> and the federal judge overseeing the case described the Vikings as “a neo-Nazi, white supremacist gang.”<sup>26</sup>

There exists a clear pattern and practice of LASD deputies affiliating with white supremacist, militant police gangs, with the Executioners being only the latest example. According to ABC News, right wing extremist police gangs that have operated within LASD and other Los Angeles County law enforcement agencies include: the Executioners, the Vikings, the Regulators, the Jump Out Boys, the 3000 Boys, and the Banditos.<sup>27</sup> Since the 1990s, there have been “dozens of cases...related to [LASD] deputy gangs that have led to nearly \$55 million in court judgments and settlements.”<sup>28</sup>

The long history of Southern California police affiliating with white supremacists and extremists is not unique to the state. In 2006, the Federal Bureau of Investigation issued an intelligence assessment, which warned that “organized groups” and “law enforcement personnel sympathetic to white supremacist causes” had successfully infiltrated law enforcement agencies.<sup>29</sup>

Nine years later, in 2015, the Federal Bureau of Investigation warned, in its “Counterterrorism Policy Directive and Policy Guide”, that “domestic terrorism investigations focused on militia extremists, white supremacist extremists, and sovereign citizen extremists often have identified active links to law enforcement officers.”<sup>30</sup>

In 2019, four years after the FBI’s latest warnings regarding law enforcement officers associating with extremist and white supremacist groups, investigative journalists discovered that hundreds of law enforcement officers in communities throughout the United States, both active and retired, had grouped together on social media platforms such as Facebook to engage in racist conversations. These groups often discussed supporting violent right-wing extremist ideology, militant groups, and white supremacist causes.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Brennan Center for Justice, Found at <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/hidden-plain-sight-racism-white-supremacy-and-far-right-militancy-law>

<sup>25</sup> Id.

<sup>26</sup> Id.

<sup>27</sup> ABC News, Found at <https://abc7.com/compton-deputy-gang-executioners-attacked-beating/6356565/>

<sup>28</sup> Id.

<sup>29</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, Counterterrorism Division, Intelligence Assessment, White Supremacist Infiltration of Law Enforcement, October 17, 2006, 4, <http://s3.documentcloud.org/documents/402521/doc-26-white-supremacist-infiltration.pdf>, found at <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/hidden-plain-sight-racism-white-supremacy-and-far-right-militancy-law>.

<sup>30</sup> Alice Speri, The Intercept, Found at <https://theintercept.com/2017/01/31/the-fbi-has-quietly-investigated-white-supremacist-infiltration-of-law-enforcement>

<sup>31</sup> Nick Statt, The Verge, Found at <https://www.theverge.com/2019/6/14/18679598/facebook-hate-groups-law-enforcement-police-officers-racism-islamaphobia>.

These examples and FBI reports denote specific incidences of a broader, longstanding, pervasive relationship between right-wing extremism and law enforcement. According to the Brennan Center for Justice, since 2000, “law enforcement officials with alleged connections to white supremacist groups or far-right militant activities have been exposed in Alabama, California, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Louisiana, Michigan, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, and elsewhere.”<sup>32</sup> It is my concern that the Executioners operating within the Los Angeles Sheriff’s Department are one more example of this insidious American tradition of coupling right-wing extremism with the police.

The advent of social media has only made these relationships clearer. As noted, hundreds of law enforcement officers have been exposed for engaging in abhorrent, racist activity online.<sup>33</sup> This bigoted online activity is not merely repulsive speech, but potentially indicative of these officers’ willingness to engage in violent, hateful crimes against American citizens. For example, the FBI’s 2015 counterterrorism policy makes clear that these officers do not merely hold white supremacist views, but actually have “active links” with white supremacists under criminal investigation for domestic terrorism.<sup>34</sup>

Instead of being treated as isolated incidents, these “active links” must be understood within a greater historical context demonstrating a pervasive relationship between extremism and a subset of law enforcement officers. The American people cannot put their trust in the police officers sworn to protect them until they believe the hatred, racism, and murderous violence discussed, and carried out, by militant, far-right, and white supremacist groups operating within our local law enforcement communities are removed. These “active links” are damaging not only to the minority groups targeted by law enforcement associating with extremist groups, but also to the vast majority of police who hold no such views and are merely trying to protect their communities —like the whistleblower deputy who revealed information about the Executioners gang operating within LASD.

In the decades since the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s, our nation has made significant progress toward the ultimate goal of eliminating the racism presently embedded within law enforcement agencies. While officers no longer openly tout their affiliations with the Ku Klux Klan as they once freely did,<sup>35</sup> our criminal system will never uphold the ideals of equitable justice and fairness so long as gangs like the Executioners and other right-wing extremists freely operate within our police departments. This police gang has been accused of celebrating and encouraging violence against citizens, a shocking accusation that completely and wholly erodes the public’s already fragile trust in the law enforcement community.

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<sup>32</sup> Brennan Center for Justice, Found at <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/hidden-plain-sight-racism-white-supremacy-and-far-right-militancy-law>

<sup>33</sup> Nick Statt, The Verge, Found at <https://www.theverge.com/2019/6/14/18679598/facebook-hate-groups-law-enforcement-police-officers-racism-islamaphobia>.

<sup>34</sup> Alice Sperti, The Intercept, Found at <https://theintercept.com/2017/01/31/the-fbi-has-quietly-investigated-white-supremacist-infiltration-of-law-enforcement>

<sup>35</sup> Brennan Center for Justice, Found at <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/hidden-plain-sight-racism-white-supremacy-and-far-right-militancy-law>

White supremacy and right-wing extremism tear at the fabric of our society. When such hateful, racist ideologies combine with the power our communities delegate to the police, killings, death, unlawful arrests, and murder are the clear result. This must end.

I ask that DOJ initiate an investigation into the existence of any "Executioners" gang operating within LASD, as well as launch a pattern or practice investigation, pursuant to the DOJ's 42 U.S.C. 14141 powers, into the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department for potential civil rights and constitutional violations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maxine Waters". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a prominent initial "M".

Maxine Waters

Member of Congress