

New report demands change in L.A. police force



LOS ANGELES (AP) — The rage, resentment and deprivation that triggered the Los Angeles riots still plague the city and "it could happen again," the head of an investigative panel warned Wednesday.

William H. Webster commented as he released a thick report that laid heavy blame on former Police Chief Daryl Gates for failing to properly prepare his force for the violence that struck April 29.

"Preparation and training cannot be conducted in the midst of a crisis," said the former FBI director.

Gates responded by defending his record and saying the study's leaders are liars.

The report blasted city officials for becoming "a dysfunctional family" whose personal hostility and mistrust kept them from working as a team.

Webster warned that the police department must become closer to the community, with more officers patrolling the streets, if future violence is to be averted.

The March 3, 1991 beating of black motorist Rodney King by white LAPD officers was seen as the beginning of a crisis that culminated in the April 29 acquittals of four officers on most charges.

When rioting broke out after the acquittals, the report said, "Neither the city nor the LAPD had a real plan for what to do in this emergency." When the riots were finally quelled three days later, 53 people were dead and damage was estimated at more than \$1 billion.

Webster and Hubert Williams, president of the Wash-

ington-based Police Foundation, conducted a five-month study of the riots. More than 100 volunteers worked on the investigation at the request of the Los Angeles Police Commission.

Webster faulted Gates for not grasping the enormity of the situation in the riot's first hours when he could have sought aid from other law enforcement agencies.

"There was a tendency for the LAPD to stand alone," Webster said. "They gave aid but didn't ask for it."

Of Gates' management style, he said: "There was a lot of tradition about the LAPD. You can tend to believe your own movies after awhile."

Gates responded quickly, telling radio station KFWB: "I haven't read the report, but I can just tell you that both Hubert Williams and William Webster — and I make this charge — are liars."

Later, on his own radio show on KFI, Gates held a news conference during which he defended his record and blasted the commission and the news media.

"If you trashed the military the way you've trashed the LAPD, you'd lose every single war," he told reporters.

Asked why there was no specific plan for a riot, he answered: "How often do you have a riot in your city?"

As for complaints of no visible police presence during the riot's beginning, Gates snapped: "Maybe what we should have done was blown a few heads off and maybe your TV cameras would have seen that."

Webster tried to put to rest persistent speculation that Gates purposely held back his forces out of pique.

"I don't think he's the kind of man who would do that," Webster said. "I don't think he could or would try to cause injury to people or property. ... We do not question his loyalty."

Gates' main failing was that "he thought that the LAPD could handle anything," Williams added. "He underestimated the situation."

The report concluded: "The chief of police, in particular, did not take personal command of the department's response as he seemingly should have, given the seriousness and confusion of the situation."

Gates was not the group's only target. The two-volume report blamed the mayor, City Council and chief administrative officer for failing to work as a team.

"Such was the case in the period of time leading up to the April violence when Los Angeles city government resembled nothing so much as a dysfunctional family," the report said.

"The mayor and the Police Commission and the LAPD deputy chiefs all appeared to have had poor working relationships and communication with the chief of police, a condition aggravated in no small part by the City Council's reversal of the attempt to suspend the chief following the King beating."

New Police Chief Willie Williams said Wednesday that improvements have been made but even now there is no complete plan for dealing with such a crisis.

"We are in the process of reorganizing," he said.

Soldier kills two others, then fatally shoots self

FORT CAMPBELL, Ky. (AP) — A soldier shot and killed two sergeants after returning from a field exercise, then fatally shot himself, the Army said Wednesday.

Spec. Gregory Radcliff, 25, of Chicago was upset with his sergeant over something that happened during the military maneuvers at Fort Campbell and asked to see him in his office Tuesday, the *Nashville* (Tenn.) *Banner* reported.

He poked a pistol into the sergeant's face and fired, killing him, said the newspaper, citing an anonymous source close to the investigation. Radcliff then killed another soldier who heard the shot and had come to

investigate, and shot himself before he could be stopped, it said.

Killed were 1st Sgt. George Brewster, 39, of Pinson, Ala., and Staff Sgt. Elijah Miller, 34, of Rembert, S.C. It was unclear which one was Radcliff's sergeant.

A Fort Campbell spokesman, Maj. Ed Gribbins, said the .357-caliber Magnum used was privately owned, not military issue.

Army officials said they had not established a motive for the shootings. Operation Mega Gold, a field exercise involving 3,300 soldiers, is in its second week at Fort Campbell.

Official to stop shredding papers

WASHINGTON (AP) — A senior Agriculture Department official accused of improprieties involving hiring and contracts was ordered Wednesday to stop shredding documents, a USIA spokesman said.

A document shredder was removed from the office of Sarita Schotta after whistleblowers complained to the Senate Agriculture Committee and The Associated Press that she was destroying documents.

USDA's Office of Inspector General, in a Sept. 29 audit, said Schotta was responsible for numerous improprieties involving contracting, training, hiring and travel. Schotta, a political appointee, is the deputy administrator for management at the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service.

USDA spokesman Roger Runnigen said Schotta had been shredding draft copies of her response to the audit and replacing them with updated versions. Schotta contends the audit

is vindictive and full of mistakes. She has promised to respond to the investigators' findings by the end of the month.

Runnigen said the shredder was taken out of Schotta's office and moved to her bosses' office. The administrator's office must now review any documents that Schotta wants destroyed, he said.

Jim Cubie, chief counsel to the Senate Agriculture Committee, questioned USDA about Schotta's use of the shredder after whistleblowers called the panel to say she was destroying documents Wednesday morning.

"In light of the inspector general's report, even though she might have good reason for having a shredder, she shouldn't have a shredder in her office at this time," Cubie said.

He said a top aide to Agriculture Secretary Edward Madigan assured him that the shredder had been removed from Schotta's office.

SNOW STUFF

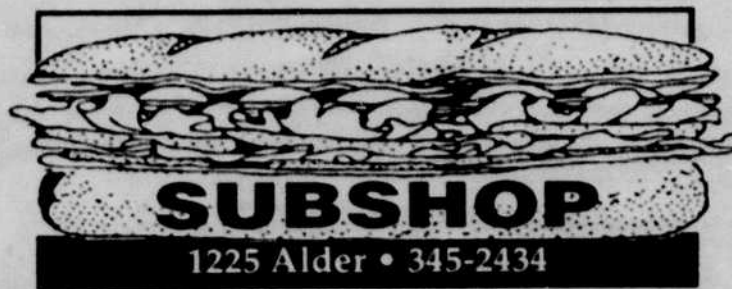
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