

King witness says LAPD retaliated



LOS ANGELES (AP) — A SWAT team supervisor claims he was relieved of teaching duty at the Police Academy for testifying as a use-of-force expert that the Rodney King beating was justified.

"I didn't say one word on the witness stand that wasn't gospel truth that couldn't be documented," Sgt. Charles L. Duke said Tuesday. "The department is covering up."

Lt. John M. Dunkin, a police spokesman, declined comment because the matter is under review.

Duke filed a grievance against the Police Department shortly after he was informed in March that he no longer could teach use-of-force policy to officers. He was officer-in-charge of the Police Academy's physical training unit, and currently supervises a SWAT team.

Superiors told him he was "out of synch" with the use-of-force policy, Duke said Tuesday.

The teaching ban followed his testimony at the state trial of four officers charged in King's March 3, 1991, beating and came six days before Duke was to testify at the officers' federal civil rights trial.

At both trials, Duke contradicted testimony from other LAPD witnesses for the prosecution and said he felt the baton blows and kicks given King met police policy because King was combative.

The officers were acquitted in the state trial, but two subsequently were convicted in federal court of violating King's civil rights.

"Our position is that they took retaliatory action against him," said Hank Hernandez, an attorney for the Police Protective League, which filed an unfair labor practice complaint with the city's Employment Relations Board.

An LAPD review of Duke's federal trial testimony found last month that it "contains critical misperceptions of the circumstances surrounding the Rodney King arrest, the department's use-of-force policy and general operational policy."

"The degree of force used in the King incident was not justified," the review concluded.

Gunman filmed at target practice

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The gunman who shot up a San Francisco law firm in a deadly rampage was videotaped target shooting two weeks ago, and the cameraman said he was quiet but mentioned his distaste for attorneys.

Gian Luigi Ferri also tried to adjust a semiautomatic pistol to make it shoot faster, the man who videotaped him recalled Wednesday.

The 41-year-old amateur cameraman, who lives in suburban Woodland Hills, spoke on condition of anonymity. He said he didn't want his name associated with last Thursday's tragedy, in which eight died and six were wounded before Ferri shot himself to death.

The cameraman, a gun enthusiast, said he met Ferri at two gun shows in Las Vegas and

Anaheim, Calif., in May before they went target shooting in the Mojave Desert.

"I just met him on a couple of occasions and just remember him as a big, heavyset man," he recalled. "He just seemed like a quiet and polite guy. He really didn't talk much. I couldn't tell that he was unstable."

On June 18, the cameraman and a friend went with Ferri to the desert north of Los Angeles and met for breakfast before the hourlong target practice.

"I went to the restroom and he (Ferri) was talking to my buddy and he told him he didn't like attorneys," the cameraman said in a telephone interview.

He said Ferri brought two 9mm semiautomatic pistols called Tech-9s to the practice. He remembers jokingly asking

Ferri if he was "going to play Steven Seagal in 'Under Siege.'" In the action movie, Seagal portrays a one-man army fighting terrorists taking over a nuclear warship.

The cameraman said it appeared that Ferri, 55, had some knowledge of firearms and shot about 100 to 150 rounds at empty food cans they had set up for practice.

"He was trying to adjust the hellfire switch that makes it shoot a little faster," he said.

Ferri's rampage 13 days later in a San Francisco high-rise office building began at the law firm Pettit & Martin, where some of the victims worked. A frustrated businessman, Ferri left a rambling letter blaming food additives, the law firm and others for his woes.

First woman fighter pilot ends training

HOLLOMAN AIR FORCE BASE, N.M. (AP) — Lt. Jeannie Flynn wrapped up seven weeks of training Wednesday to be the first female Air Force fighter pilot the same way she began — surrounded by the media.

"Given my choice, I would have come in low-profile," Flynn said.

Flynn leaves Thursday for water survival training in Florida before moving on to Luke Air Force Base in Arizona, where she will spend about seven months learning to fly the F-15E Strike Eagle, the world's most advanced fighter-attack aircraft.

"She's a great officer, a great American and certain to be a great fighter pilot," said Brig. Gen. Lloyd "Fig" Newton, commander at Holloman, which has two other women pilots beginning fighter training. Flynn, 26, began training at Holloman in mid-

May, shortly after Defense Secretary Les Aspin ordered the military services to drop restrictions on women flying combat missions.

Flynn acknowledged that the initial attention she got made it a bit difficult to settle in. "But it was something that was unavoidable," she said.

She requested an assignment as an F-15 pilot upon graduating first in her pilot training class at Texas' Laughlin Air Force Base in January.

But since Air Force policy at the time did not allow women to fly combat aircraft, she had to opt for another assignment.

Aspin's decision changed her future, although Flynn, who was promoted from 2nd lieutenant last week, doesn't know where her career will take her. "Truthfully," she said, "I take this one assignment at a time."

Study shows class differences affect Americans' health

BOSTON (AP) — The poor and ill-educated are losing ground to people who are better off even as the lives of all Americans get longer, a study found.

Though death rates have declined among all social classes since the 1960s, those who have finished high school and earn at least moderate livings are doing better, researchers said. Class appears to be an increasingly important determinant of health for men and women, both black and white.

The study in Thursday's New England Journal of Medicine raises questions about whether changing the nation's health care system will reduce the disparities.

Differences in death rates between the classes increased between 1960 and 1986, a time when Medicaid programs were set up to improve access to care for the poor, researchers found.

"The data provide an important critique for the health care reform proposal," said Dr. Gregory Pappas, who directed the study. "The implication is that even in a perfectly equitable health care system, these problems will persist."

An editorial published with the study agreed that the class differences in death rates cannot be explained simply by better care for the privileged.

"Despite the importance of socioeconomic status to health, no one knows

quite how it operates," wrote Dr. Marcia Angell, the journal's executive editor. "It is perhaps the most mysterious of the determinants of health."

Pappas, a researcher at the National Center for Health Statistics, based his findings on two nationwide health surveys that covered 44,216 Americans between ages 25 and 64 in 1986. He compared the results with a similar study conducted in 1960.

Pappas found that over the 26-year period, the differences in mortality rates attributable to education levels increased by over 20 percent in women and doubled in men.

Among white men who did not finish

high school, there were nine deaths for every 1,000 people in 1960. This had fallen to 7.6 by 1986. However, for white male college graduates the decline was much sharper — from 5.7 deaths to 2.8.

Similar comparative statistics are not available for white women and blacks. However, the 1986 survey shows the sharp difference in mortality rates that persist.

The figures show there were 3.4 deaths per 1,000 people among white women who failed to finish high school, 13.4 for black men and 6.2 for black women. Among college graduates, the death rates were 1.8 for white women, six for black men and 2.2 for black women.

Oregon Daily Emerald

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