

...Vancouver cop reinstated after two-year ordeal

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barricade standoff. Barker (then the assistant chief) and another commander were in the area and stopped at the scene. The standoff ended with officers and a canine unit going into the house and bringing out the suspect. No officers were injured, but the police dog suffered a stab wound.

Police Chief Martinek praised the officers for their work. In a memo to the officers, he wrote: "Another example of excellent police work by our men, women and K-9s. Nice job to all of our officers involved in this."

Two weeks later, on April 26, Barker called for a meeting with Luse to talk about his performance as a lieutenant. At that meeting Barker criticized Luse's performance during the April 12 standoff. According to testimony from the arbitrator's report, Barker told Luse that he felt "disregarded or dismissed" by Luse. Barker went on to tell Luse that he was not effective as a lieutenant and that he planned to demote him to sergeant.

Luse refused to be demoted voluntarily, which set in motion an internal affairs investigation.

On May 22, 2006, Luse was sent a formal complaint alleging that he was

insubordinate to Barker at the April 12 standoff and that over the past year he had failed to meet deadlines and written job performance expectations. Barker said that at the scene of the standoff Luse on three occasions ignored his request to find out if the man barricaded in the house had any weapons.

On June 29, 2006, Luse was notified of a second internal affairs investigation, this one for alleged insubordination for not following through on an order to call an assistant city attorney who had concerns that an officer under Luse's command forcibly arrested a man without legal justification. That arrest took place on May 26, 2006.

On July 9, 2006, Luse was put on administrative leave with pay — unheard of in the police department for a performance-based issue. "Administrative leave is normally used for high liability incidences that involve officer shootings or excessive abuses," Luse told the NW Labor Press.

Luse collected his salary of \$8,200 a month, plus benefits, from the Department while he sat at home awaiting the outcome of the internal investigation.

On Oct. 11, 2006, internal affairs released a memo stating that there was a "lack of strong, reliable and credible factual support sufficient to sustain a finding of neglect of duty, incompetence and insubordination," against Luse.

Then, in late November 2006, a second round of interviews was ordered. According to the arbitrator's report, in addition to revisiting the original complaints, internal affairs wanted to pursue allegations that Luse made false statements to investigators. A separate complaint was filed.

On Feb. 7, 2007, internal affairs issued a report finding Luse in violation of proper police conduct by lying to internal affairs and for insubordination.

He was fired on March 28, 2007. Luse appealed his termination through Local 11. The union brought in attorney Michael Tedesco to assist. "I'm thankful that the union believed me and stood with me. I can't overstate that enough," Luse said.

After he was fired, Local 11 hired Luse as an organizer. Luse said that when he met workers he pointed to his own experience.

"I told them that I've never worked

without a (union) contract. You have insurance for your house and car. A union contract is insurance for your job. I know first-hand how important that can be. If you are wrongfully terminated or your labor rights are violated, you have an advocate. I'm the poster boy for being wrongfully terminated."


On June 21, 2008, arbitrator Beck confirmed that by exonerating Luse of all charges.

Lt. Luse says he will go back to work "with a clean slate" and he doesn't anticipate any problems. "It was a convincing win for me. I just

want to go back to work and do my job."

A new police chief (Cliff Cook) was hired in April 2007. Barker is back at his post as assistant chief.

(Editor's Note: A recent assessment of the City of Vancouver's budget projects a deficit of more than \$6 million for the 2009-10 biennium. Approximately 76 percent of the City's budget is comprised of salary and benefit costs for police officers and civilian support staff. Unless steps are taken to remedy the anticipated shortfall, the Vancouver Police Department will have to reduce its operating budget by \$2.3 million.)



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