

13-0430

PUBLIC SAFETY

MOTION APR 9 2013

Since their inception in 1967, standing SWAT ("Special Weapons And Tactics") teams have been an integral part of the Los Angeles Police Department. Using military-style weapons and specialized tactics in high-risk operations that fall outside of the capabilities of regular, uniformed police, SWAT teams are always ready to handle barricade/ hostage situations, suicide intervention, and other violent situations in heavily fortified locations where weapons are present and diversionary tactics are anticipated. The LAPD SWAT Team is known worldwide as one of the foremost police tactical units in contemporary law enforcement, and its elite members have earned hundreds of commendations and citations, including several Medals of Valor, the LAPD's highest award for heroism in the line of duty.

So, it is not surprising when city officials and residents are outraged to find out that, as early as this past week, a rash of "swatting" incidents have occurred in the city. "Swatting" refers to false 911 calls being made by individuals claiming that a robbery, hostage situation, or other serious crime is occurring in order to draw a strong police response to the home of the victim. These individuals use sophisticated means to obscure their identities, yet at the same time bring themselves notoriety, much in the same way that hackers gain notoriety by breaking down security walls of large organizations. SWAT teams have been called to the homes of various celebrities based on these prank calls to 911 reporting a violent crime in progress.

Last week, police responded to at least four "swatting" incidents at the homes of various celebrities. On Wednesday, police responded to the home of Sean Combs based on a false call to 911 that an assault was occurring. The next day, a caller falsely reported that a shooting had occurred at Rihanna's home in Pacific Palisades. The following day, police were summoned to Selena Gomez's home in Sherman Oaks based on a call that a murder had occurred inside her house and that there was a threat to burn her house down. When the police arrived, they found the report was false. Two hours earlier, an incident of shots being fired at Justin Timberlake's home in the Hollywood Hills was falsely reported and police responded only to find nothing out of the ordinary.

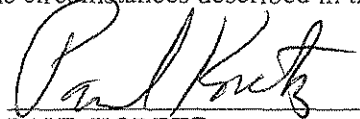
These "swatting" incidents pose a threat to public safety, not only because they tie up much needed LAPD resources, but also because officers responding to these fake incidents have been injured. Sources inside the LAPD feel it's only a matter of time before an officer gets killed as a result of a "swatting" incident. We appreciate Councilmember Englander's leadership in seeking City support for state legislation to address this issue. We need to see what the Council can do now at the City level to support the Police Department in addressing this problem.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the Los Angeles Police Department report to the Public Safety Committee in 30 days with ways the City Council can assist them with combating these crimes committed by pranksters.

I FURTHER MOVE that the City Attorney also draft an ordinance to require the perpetrators of these "swatting" incidents pay restitution to the LAPD for all costs incurred responding to these "false alarm" incidents, and report on the feasibility of a second ordinance to provide a reward to anyone who provides information leading to the arrest and conviction of the perpetrators of this specific crime.

I FURTHER MOVE that the Chief Legislative Analyst report to the Public Safety Committee with a review of comparable ordinances in other jurisdictions that may apply to the circumstances described in this motion.

PRESENTED BY:


PAUL KORETZ
Councilmember, 5th District

SECONDED BY:




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