

STATE CAPITOL
P.O. BOX 942849
SACRAMENTO, CA 94249-0030
(916) 319-2030
FAX (916) 319-2130

DISTRICT OFFICE
100 WEST ALISAL STREET, SUITE 134
SALINAS, CA 93901
(831) 759-8676
FAX (831) 759-2961

E-MAIL
Assemblymember.Alejo@assembly.ca.gov

Assembly California Legislature



LUIS A. ALEJO
ASSEMBLYMEMBER, THIRTIETH DISTRICT

COMMITTEES
CHAIR: CALIFORNIA LATINO
LEGISLATIVE CAUCUS
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October 13, 2015

Honorable Loretta E. Lynch
United States Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001

RE: Request for the U. S. Department of Justice to seek federal takeover of the King City Police Department

Dear U.S. Attorney General Lynch:

I respectfully request the United States Department of Justice, in coordination with the California Attorney General, to initiate an investigation and seek a federal consent decree with the King City Police Department, up to and including seeking the placement of a receiver to ensure compliance. Given the series of reprehensible events involving police corruption, civil rights violations, and most recently the termination "without cause" of the Department's new police chief after only three and a half months of service, I believe this action by the Department of Justice is urgently needed to restore public trust and ensure policing is conducted in accordance with the law. An audit of the King City Police Department's policies and procedures requested by my office is soon to be conducted by the California State Auditor. However, more immediate action is necessary in light of recent events in King City. Therefore, I also request an investigation of the King City Police Department be conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation to determine the extent to which the aforementioned actions have compromised public safety in this community.

King City, a community of 13,200 residents, nearly 90 percent of whom are Latino, is located in South Monterey County, in the Northern District of the U.S. Attorney's Office in California. Over the last two years, illegal conduct by current and former members of the King City Police Department has been staggering. In February 2014, the acting police chief, a former police chief, the acting police chief's brother and four police officers – a third of the police department – were arrested and charged with involvement in an illegal car impoundment scheme and other crimes. The scheme targeted poor, undocumented drivers through illegal traffic stops to impound their vehicles. The vehicles were then kept and sold, or in other cases gifted to relatives or other officers.

To date, the then acting police chief, his brother, the former police chief and three officers have pled guilty to numerous charges. And last week, the former police chief and an officer were sentenced to thirty days of jail time and three years of probation. Additionally, a class action civil lawsuit has been filed against the police department on behalf of 20 King City residents who were victims of the vehicle towing and impound scheme.

But the pattern of misconduct did not stop at illegally impounding vehicles. Last summer, another officer was arrested and found guilty of brandishing a firearm during a serious domestic violence incident. There is also a pending FBI investigation against the King City Police Department that



began in 2013 after several thousand dollars went missing after the police department recovered money from a credit union bank robbery. Even worse, recently, the family of a slain King City resident informed my office that their son who had been shot several times had taken the courageous step of identifying his attackers to King City Police. But, rather than place him into protective custody as promised, the King City Police Department sat on the information and then their son was later shot to death.

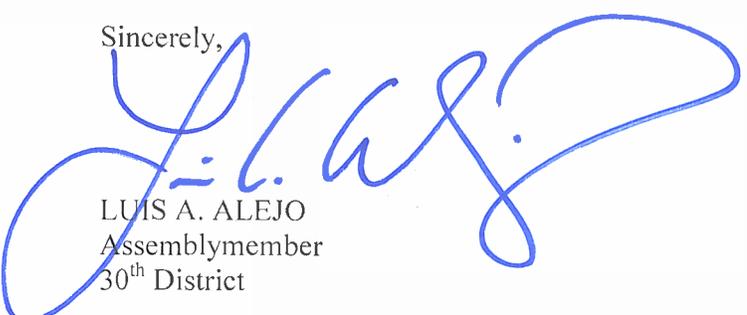
Last June, more than a year after the now infamous towing scandal and after two interim police chiefs, the King City City Council appointed Ronald Forgue as the department's permanent police chief. But last week, after only three and a half months on the job, Chief Forgue was terminated without cause. The Chief had just initiated needed reforms and an audit of evidence in 28 unsolved homicide cases, including seeking assistance from the FBI. Equally disturbing, the City Manager appointed Alex Tirado as interim chief despite her alleged interference in the arrest of her brother in June after he threatened to kill a woman. The appointment prompted a letter of no confidence from the King City Police Officers Association last week.

According to the FBI's Violent Crime Report, King City now has the highest per capita homicide rate in the state. This worsening situation in King City is not acceptable and the residents of the city deserve better.

The pattern and practice of illegal behavior by the King City Police Department, the mishandling of evidence, the increase in violent crime, and civil rights abuses of undocumented residents, merit the extraordinary step of placing the department under a federal consent decree. When similar actions were taken against departments in Oakland, Los Angeles, Pittsburg, New Orleans, and Cincinnati there was transformative change in how those departments policed their communities.

Ultimately, the residents of King City and I have had enough of the police department's and the city administration's behavior and we need your assistance as promptly as possible. I appreciate your consideration of this request. If you should have any questions or concerns, I am available to discuss this further with you at (916) 319-2030.

Sincerely,



LUIS A. ALEJO
Assemblymember
30th District

cc: Brian Stretch, Acting U.S. Attorney, Office of the U.S. Attorneys, Northern District of California
Honorable Kamala D. Harris, Attorney General, State of California
FBI San Francisco Field office