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News Release

Durham Police Department

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Police Department Facebook Internal Investigation

On November 7, an internal investigation began involving three officers who allegedly made offensive comments on their Facebook pages. Investigators from the Police Department's Internal Affairs Unit quickly cleared one officer of any wrongdoing. An investigation was also initiated against a second officer and is currently ongoing. However, to date, claims against that officer are unsubstantiated.

The remaining inquiry refuted claims that the third officer made any racial slurs. The investigators did sustain the following violations of departmental rules and regulations: Conduct Unbecoming Police Department Personnel, Responsibility to Respect the Rights of Others and Use of Discriminatory Jokes and Slurs.

The officer granted permission to share pertinent facts about his case to dispel previously publicized rumors and misinformation about the allegations.

The investigation started after another officer complained about statements on the officer's Facebook page. The statements included "[the officer] is preparing for his 2nd dan" and "[the officer] realizes that this is what we get for passing the 14th Amendment."

The investigation revealed that the officer meant to refer to the 19th Amendment, not the 14th, because he was teasing his fiancé in response to a comment she had made about voting procedures prior to the election. He subsequently corrected the error about the Amendment number on his webpage. [The 14th Amendment refers to equal protection under the law for all persons and the 19th Amendment gives women the right to vote].

Several officers told investigators they believed that the term "dan" was a racial slur, but further investigation proved that "dan" actually is a martial arts term used to describe a degree of proficiency. Investigators verified that the officer did have a first-degree dan in martial arts and was preparing to be tested for his second-degree dan, which he recently obtained.

The investigation also indicated that none of the comments in question were made on a City computer or while the officer was on duty. However, according to Police Chief Jose L. Lopez Sr., the officer did

identify himself as a Durham police officer on his webpage and therefore his actions are subject to the Police Department's rules and regulations.

Disciplinary action has already been taken against the officer. The officer has apologized for any perceived harm he inadvertently caused the department and the community.

"The officer has cooperated completely with our investigation and made his Facebook page available to the department throughout the investigation. He has since taken down the webpage," Lopez said.

"We take very seriously any activity by a police officer that has the potential to create a weakening of public confidence in this organization and that is why we felt it was necessary to thoroughly investigate these allegations and take action where necessary," he said.

As a result of this case, the Police Department will provide training to its officers about the ramifications of inappropriate Internet usage as it relates to the department's code of conduct.