

# Corruption saga continues

## Rookie quit police force after witnessing abuse

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) — Officer Keith Batt was a 23-year-old rookie just three weeks out of the academy. He went straight to the night shift, where most officers start their careers.

There, on patrol in west Oakland, one of the city's most dangerous neighborhoods, Batt met The Riders.

For three weeks in June and July, prosecutors say, the rookie watched his fellow officers beat, harass and falsely arrest at least 10 people. Then, on July 3, he allegedly saw a man arrested on trumped-up charges that he was seen discarding 17 rocks of cocaine.

The rookie reported what he saw and quit the force, setting in motion a police corruption scandal that has led to the arrest of four officers and the dismissal of scores of cases.

Exactly how far and wide The Riders scandal will reach remains to be seen, despite Police Chief Richard

Word's insistence that the alleged abuse was limited to the four officers.

"It's burying one's head in the sand to assume these cases are confined to a short period of time involving these four officers," said lawyer John Burris, who has talked

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Lawyer

to at least 15 people arrested by The Riders about suing.

The four officers — Frank Vazquez, 44, Clarence "Chuck" Mabanag, 35, Jude Siapno, 32, and Matthew Hornung, 29 — were charged Nov. 2 with offenses including assault, kidnapping and filing

false reports. Three are expected to enter pleas on Dec. 6; Vazquez is a fugitive, believed to be hiding in Mexico.

Lawyers for the three officers, who are on paid leave, said they have seen no evidence backing up the charges. Mabanag's lawyer, Michael Rains, said the officers are "both sad and anxious to have their stories heard." Vazquez's lawyer has not returned repeated calls.

While the charges are limited to what Batt witnessed, the department is re-examining the officers' records and looking at whether other members of the force were involved.

Prosecutor David Hollister said 49 mostly drug-related cases — convictions and pending cases alike — have been dismissed and more could fall apart as his office sorts through all cases involving the four officers dating back 18 months before they were taken off the streets.

# Mammography centers face crisis

CHICAGO (AP) — Mammography centers are scaling back or even closing because of inadequate reimbursement rates and malpractice fears at a time when more and more aging baby boomers need annual breast exams.

It all adds up to a crisis taking shape in mammography, experts warned Wednesday.

With access shrinking, women often have to wait months to schedule an annual breast cancer screening and may decide to skip the exams altogether. Even women with suspicious lumps may have to wait several weeks to get a mammogram.

That can delay the diagnosis of breast cancer and result in tumors being detected at later, less treatable stages, a panel of doctors said at the Radiology Society of North America's annual meeting.

Studies have shown that routine mammograms can decrease the risk of dying from breast cancer by as much as 40 percent. About 1 million women a year are turning 40, the age when many doctors say annual screening should begin, the panel said.

Screening mammograms typically cost between \$75 and \$150, while diagnostic mammograms, performed when a problem is suspected, may cost well more than \$200.

Recommended Medicare reimbursement rates, set by Congress, are well below that — \$67 for a screening mammogram and \$81 for a diagnostic exam, said Dr. Stephen Feig, director of breast imaging at Mount Sinai Medical Center in New York.

That cuts into the budgets at many mammography centers, which are being subsidized by their other radiology services, said Dr. Ellen Mendelson, director of a breast imaging center at Western Pennsylvania Hospital.

The most prominent closure occurred last year when New York University Medical Center shut one of its two mammography services for financial reasons. A few smaller centers elsewhere have closed, and many others have reduced services, the panel said. Lagging reimbursement rates and concerns over malpractice — the exams miss between 10 percent and 20 percent of cancers — are leading many would-be mammographers to choose other specialties, the panel added.

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