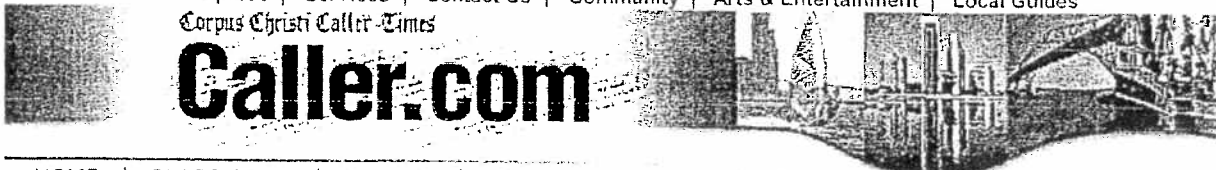


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Wednesday, November 22, 2000

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L.A. to pay \$15 million to man paralyzed in police shooting

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Settlement reached in case of man who allegedly was shot in the back by officers who then planted a gun on him

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES - The City Council unanimously approved a \$15 million settlement Tuesday for a man whose paralysis in a police shooting has come to symbolize the largest police scandal in Los Angeles history.

Javier Francisco Ovando, 23, was shot in the back by officers who then allegedly planted a gun on him to deflect blame.

He served more than two years in prison for assaulting an officer before his conviction was thrown out last year after the disgraced ex-officer at the heart of the scandal said he and his partner planted a gun on Ovando after shooting him.

The settlement is the largest in the scandal so far and is nearly three times the amount given to 1991 beating victim Rodney King. Ovando's legs are paralyzed.

"This gives him very good compensation," said Gregory Moreno, Ovando's attorney. "We were looking for a reasonable amount of money for him to get on with his life and put the pieces back together."

The settlement brings to nearly \$30 million the amount Los Angeles has agreed to pay victims of the scandal. About 70 lawsuits are pending.

Councilman Mike Feuer said the settlement was necessary because the city stood "very little chance of prevailing" in a jury trial. Mayor Richard Riordan called it a fair resolution "to a terrible miscarriage of justice."

"Now we must put this behind us, and look forward to the future by implementing police reforms that ensure this will never happen again," he said.

The corruption scandal is centered in the Rampart police station's gang-fighting unit, whose members allegedly beat, robbed and even shot suspects. An investigation has led to charges being dismissed or overturned in about 100 cases and the convictions last week of three officers. It also was a catalyst for an agreement that provides federal oversight of police department reforms.

The scandal came to light after ex-officer Rafael Perez, who was arrested for stealing cocaine from a police evidence room, cooperated in exchange for a lighter sentence and immunity from other charges.

Perez told investigators that he and his former partner, Nino Durden, were staking out an apartment building when Durden drew his gun and shot Ovando. Perez said he also opened fire.

The two then planted another gun on Ovando and claimed he tried to attack them, Perez said.

Durden has pleaded innocent to attempted murder charges and is awaiting trial.

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