Thur 11-14-13 LA Times

Pastor, a top Baca aide, put on leave

Bishop Edward Turner is under review after officials learn of a pot shop on his property.

By Richard Winton

A pastor and top civilian aide to L.A. County Sheriff Lee Baca was relieved of duty and is the subject of an internal affairs investigation after officials learned he owns a South Los Angeles property that houses a medical marijuana shop, a spokesman said Wednesday.

Bishop Edward R. Turner works as a paid field deputy for Baca and oversaw the department's Multi-Faith Clergy Council for more than a decade. The bishop, who founded Power of Love Christian Fellowship ministries in South L.A., earns at least $105,000 a year working for Baca.

He was notified by Baca on Tuesday evening that he would be relieved of duty after the department learned from KABC-TV about the medical marijuana shop and that a nonprofit he operates had its tax status revoked, said sheriff's spokesman Steve Whitmore.

"An internal affairs investigation has been launched into Bishop Turner," Whitmore said. "This is first the sheriff had heard of these allegations."

Turner was placed on paid leave Wednesday and assigned to his home during work hours while the internal investigation is ongoing. He had to return a county-owned car, three computers and other equipment to the department. Turner did not immediately return calls for comment.

According to public records, Turner owns a property at 1425 W. Manchester

[See **Turner,** AA2]

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Baca aide relieved of duty

[**Turner,** from AA1]

Ave. — across the street from his church — that houses Manchester Caregivers, which describes itself as a marijuana dispensary that offers cannabis brownies, cookies and smoking accessories to those with medical marijuana prescriptions.

"We are looking at what he knew and when he knew it," Whitmore said of the department probe.

The dispensary is not among the approximately 130 marijuana outlets meeting voter-approved criteria for operation in Los Angeles, according to a list from the L.A. City Attorney's office. The City Attorney is moving to shut down dozens of clinics operating outside the requirements approved by voters in May.

Under the measure, property owners can face prosecution and the same penalties as illegal pot shop operators, including a $1,000 fine and six months in jail. So far, no operator or landlord has been jailed.

Turner told KABC-TV he never informed the department that a marijuana store was operating on his property. Baca has stated he opposes pot dispensaries.

Mel Melcon Los Angeles Times

BISHOP EDWARD TURNER, with L.A. City Councilwoman Jan Perry in 2005, oversaw the Sheriff's Department's Multi-Faith Clergy Council.

"It was not that I was trying to hide it," Turner told the TV station. "There it is, right there."

Charity records show Turner served as chairman and founder of the Helping Our People Excel for Life Foundation, a nonprofit community group. Federal records indicate the organization had its charity status revoked after failing to file tax returns for three years.

Its last filing on record with the IRS was for its 2009 taxes, according to the Guidestar charity monitoring group. In that year, the organization's 990-EZ shows a total revenue of $8,298 and expenses of $44,969, according to the August 2010 filing.

Turner has served as a Baca field deputy for 14 years, according to Whitmore. Baca previously told The Times that Turner's primary value was in bridging the gap between the department and communities reluctant to trust police.

One of the events Turner organized is an annual multi-faith breakfast. Whitmore said the department is examining why attendees were asked for a $25 donation to attend when the food and flatware was donated for the event.

The department will also reexamine an investigation into a package containing $84,000 delivered to the charity in 2006 that was tracked by narcotics officers from L.A. International Airport. The money was seized by authorities before anyone at the charity opened it.

Turner's daughter, a deputy in the Sheriff's Department, has also been relieved of duty with pay because she is under investigation in a separate matter. According to court records, she was charged with misdemeanor battery and felony vandalism in connection with an off-duty incident.

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L.A. COUNTY

Sheriff's officials ordered to pay

Federal jury awards $210,000 in punitive damages to five severely beaten inmates

By Christina Villacorte
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In a rare ruling, a federal jury ordered several Sheriff's Department supervisors to pay $210,000 in punitive damages to five inmates severely beaten by deputies at Men's Central Jail in 2008.

The same jury last week awarded the five inmates $740,000 in general damages.

The five-week trial included videos of deputies forcibly taking inmates out of cells, causing skull fractures, broken limbs and other serious injuries.

Inmates accused the deputies of punishing them for the murder of another deputy by gang members outside his home a few days before, but deputies said they merely defended themselves during a riot by some of the jail's most violent felons.

Sheriff Lee Baca's spokesman, Steve Whitmore, said the department "disagrees with the verdict" and is considering post-trial motions, including an appeal.

"Although we respect the jury system, we stand behind our deputies," he said.

"What they did was within policy," Whitmore added. "The force they used was justifiable."

The Office of Independent Review in 2009 also investigated the cell extractions and found them consistent with department rules.

But Ron Kaye, lawyer for the plaintiffs, said the ruling showed "juries of L.A. County will no longer tolerate trampling of the rights of inmates."

"This sends a strong message to the Sheriff's Department to change their practices," he added.

Punitive damages against law enforcement agencies are "quite rare," according to research by UCLA assistant law professor Joanna Schwartz, and yet separate juries this month and last month ordered department officials to pay a combined total of $375,000.

Baca was held personally liable for $100,000 of that amount.

American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California legal director Peter Eliasberg hopes the county Board of Supervisors will hold the officials accountable.

"The question now is whether the board is going to force the taxpayers to cover these damages, or whether the board will decide that they should be

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paid by those sheriff's officials whom the juries concluded acted maliciously or in reckless disregard of the rights of the inmates."

Former Capt. Daniel Cruz was held ordered to pay $75,000 of the punitive damages awarded this month. He was also held personally liable in the other case decided last month.

Schwartz's research revealed only 20 cases over six years in which a jury awarded punitive damages against defendants from the nation's largest law enforcement agencies.

Of those 20 cases, five were in L.A. County, totaling $126,000.

"LASD had the second-most punitive damages judgments (one less than New York City) and third-highest payout in punitives," Schwartz said.