



County of Los Angeles

March 3, 2026

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County Counsel

Board of Supervisors

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Supervisor, First District

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Supervisor, Second District

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Supervisor, Third District

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Kathryn Barger
Supervisor, Fifth District

TO: EDWARD YEN
Executive Officer
Board of Supervisors

Attention: Agenda Preparation

FROM: ADRIENNE M. BYERS
Litigation Cost Manager

RE: **Item for the Board of Supervisors' Agenda
County Claims Board Recommendation
Melba Ortega v. County of Los Angeles, et al.
United States District Court Case No. 2:24-cv-03687**



Attached is the Agenda entry for the Los Angeles County Claims Board's recommendation regarding the above-referenced matter. Also attached are the Case Summary and Summary Corrective Action Plan to be made available to the public.

It is requested that this recommendation, Case Summary, and Summary Corrective Action Plan be placed on the Board of Supervisors' agenda.

AMB:lzs

Attachments

Board Agenda

MISCELLANEOUS COMMUNICATIONS

Los Angeles County Claims Board's recommendation: Authorize settlement of the matter entitled Melba Ortega v. County of Los Angeles, et al., United States District Court Case No. 2:24-cv-03687, in the amount of \$485,000, and instruct the Auditor-Controller to draw a warrant to implement this settlement from the Sheriff's Department's budget.

This lawsuit alleges that Plaintiff was subjected to disability discrimination, excessive force, and unlawful arrest.

CASE SUMMARY

INFORMATION ON PROPOSED SETTLEMENT OF LITIGATION

CASE NAME	Melba Ortega v. County of Los Angeles, et al.
CASE NUMBER	2:24-CV-03687
COURT	United States District Court
DATE FILED	January 16, 2024
COUNTY DEPARTMENT	Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department
PROPOSED SETTLEMENT AMOUNT	\$ 485,000
ATTORNEY FOR PLAINTIFF	VINCENT MILLER Law Offices of Vincent Miller
COUNTY COUNSEL ATTORNEY	MINAS SAMUELIAN Senior Deputy County Counsel
NATURE OF CASE	<p>This is a recommendation to settle for \$485,000 inclusive of attorneys' fees and costs, a federal civil rights lawsuit filed by Melba Ortega (Plaintiff), alleging disability discrimination, excessive force and unlawful arrest arising out of Plaintiff's detention and arrest.</p> <p>Given the high risks and uncertainties of litigation, a reasonable settlement at this time will avoid further litigation costs. The full and final settlement of the case in the amount of \$485,000 is recommended.</p>
PAID ATTORNEY FEES, TO DATE	\$ 66,356
PAID COSTS, TO DATE	\$ 7,852



Summary Corrective Action Plan

The intent of this form is to assist departments in writing a corrective action plan summary for attachment to the settlement documents developed for the Board of Supervisors and/or the County of Los Angeles Claims Board. The summary should be a specific overview of the claims/lawsuits' identified root causes and corrective actions (status, time frame, and responsible party). This summary does not replace the Corrective Action Plan form. If there is a question related to confidentiality, please consult County Counsel.

Date of incident/event:	January 16, 2021
Briefly provide a description of the incident/event:	<p style="text-align: center;">Summary Corrective Action Plan 2025-251</p> <p>Details in this document summarize the incident. The information provided is a culmination of various sources to provide an abstract of the incident.</p> <p>Based on multiple investigative reports, on January 16, 2021, Deputy One initiated a traffic stop on the Plaintiff's vehicle because it was speeding at 75 mph (visually) in a 55 mph zone. Deputy One asked the driver if he was on probation or parole, and the driver stated he was a convicted felon but off parole.</p> <p>Deputy One asked the driver why he was on prior parole and the driver responded that he used to be a part of a gang named Colonia and participated in criminal gang activity in the past. Deputy One stated since he had prior knowledge of Colonia gang members carrying weapons, he "ordered" the driver out of the vehicle to conduct a pat search for weapons.</p> <p>Deputy One then ordered the Plaintiff out of the vehicle to conduct a pat down search for weapons in which she responded verbally aggressively. Deputy One stated that moments before the use of force, the Plaintiff lunged towards the open passenger door; in fear, Deputy One had to use force to stop the Plaintiff from reaching inside the open car door for potential weapons. A use-of-force ensued.</p> <p>The use-of-force was thoroughly investigated. It was concluded all preventable measures were exercised and force used in the incident was necessary, minimal and reasonable for the circumstances.</p>

1. Briefly describe the **root cause(s)** of the claim/lawsuit:

A **Department** root cause in this incident was Deputy One used force to detain the Plaintiff.

A **Department** root cause in this incident was Deputy One's failure to establish probable cause to remove, detain and conduct a pat down search of the Plaintiff.

A **Department** root cause was Deputy One should have called for backup prior to removing and searching multiple people in a vehicle.

A **Department** root cause was Deputy One was not wearing a body-worn camera. The Body Worn Camera Unit had not yet issued the cameras to Malibu/Lost Hills Station.

A **non-Department** root cause was the Plaintiff resisted Deputy One's orders during the detention

A **non-Department** root cause was the Plaintiff assaulted Deputy One by kicking him.

2. Briefly describe recommended corrective actions:
(Include each corrective action, due date, responsible party, and any disciplinary actions if appropriate)

Station-Level Force Investigation:

At the conclusion of the investigation, it was concluded all preventable measures were exercised and force used in the incident was necessary, minimal and reasonable for the circumstances.

Subsequently, the Plaintiff was interviewed by I.C.I.B regarding this matter. On August 16, 2024, the Justice System Integrity Division added two additional charges to the pending criminal matter against Deputy One. The charges are, one count of Penal Code 149 – Assault by a Public Officer and one count of Penal Code 118.1 – Filing a False Police Report.

Deputy One pled Nolo Contendere to count one of Penal Code 149 pertaining to an unrelated matter. Additionally, Deputy One pled Nolo Contendere to count four of Penal Code 149 pertaining to this incident; the remaining charges were dismissed.

Debriefing:

A debriefing was conducted with Deputy One after the use of force occurred. Calling for backup prior to removing multiple people from a patrol vehicle and using alternate force options was discussed. Deputy One was reportedly receptive to the debriefing.

Issuance of Body-Worn Cameras:

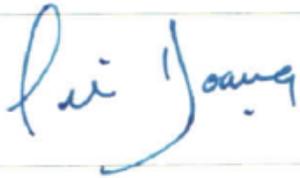
As of March 17, 2021, all sworn personnel assigned to the station were issued a Body Worn Camera to ensure all public contacts are transparent.

The use of BWCs ensures reliable recording of contact enforcement and investigative contacts with the public.

3. Are the corrective actions addressing Department-wide system issues?

- Yes – The corrective actions address Department-wide system issues.
- No – The corrective actions are only applicable to the affected parties.

Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department

Name: (Risk Management Coordinator)	
Tri Hoang, Captain Risk Management Bureau	
Signature: 	Date: 12.16.25

Name: (Department Head)	
Ron Kopperud, Chief North Patrol Division	
Signature: 	Date: 12/20/25

Chief Executive Office Risk Management Inspector General USE ONLY

Are the corrective actions applicable to other departments within the County?

- Yes, the corrective actions potentially have County-wide applicability.
- No, the corrective actions are applicable only to this Department.

Name: Betty Karmirlian (Risk Management Inspector General)	
Signature: 	Date: 12/23/25