

Press Release
For Immediate Release
March 9, 2017

PROSECUTORS FROM ACROSS THE UNITED STATES RELEASE
The 21ST CENTURY PRINCIPLES OF PROSECUTION
PEACE OFFICER USE OF FORCE PROJECT

Association of Prosecuting Attorneys' Members Detail Protocols and Principles to Help
Guide Prosecutors Investigating Peace Officer Use of Force Incidents

Washington, D.C. – Prosecutors from across the United States have joined together to release *The 21st Century Principles of Prosecution* Peace Officer Use of Force Project (Use of Force Project). The Association of Prosecuting Attorneys (APA), a national organization of elected and appointed prosecutors and their deputies, worked over the past year to establish the Use of Force Project in direct response to the difficult and divisive issue of peace officer use of force incidents. Trust in law enforcement has weakened as peace officer deadly use of force incidents have become increasingly visible throughout the country. As a result, public confidence in a criminal justice system that works for all has waned. The Use of Force Project recommends innovative and promising practices for investigating use of force cases, ensuring the integrity of use of force prosecutions, and promoting equal justice and safer communities. The release of the report comes after a meeting in California hosted by San Francisco District Attorney George Gascón.

“As perhaps the only former Chief of Police to now sit as an elected District Attorney, I recognize the challenges these incidents present for police and prosecutors, and for big and small jurisdictions alike. But I also see opportunity,” said District Attorney George Gascón. “Distrust in law enforcement impedes effective policing and public safety. Since prosecutors share a responsibility to keep our communities safe, we share responsibility to cure this distrust. We can do that by ensuring these investigations are transparent, objective and beyond reproach. Ultimately, anyone who violates the law must be held accountable, even those who wear a uniform.”

“It was an honor and a pleasure to be a part of this Use of Force Project,” said [*Insert Honorable Prosecutor’s name.*] “We hope that our months of collaborative work and inclusive discussions will have a lasting impact on the investigation and prosecution of deadly peace officer use of force cases, and in turn help change some of the current negative public perceptions on these cases.”

The APA undertook this project to demonstrate a continued commitment to prosecutorial ethics and principles by establishing a set of protocols for investigating and prosecuting deadly Peace Officer use of force cases. The work began in 2016 when the Use of Force Project reached out to experienced prosecuting attorneys, as well as other criminal and social justice professionals. The Use of Force Project involved several summit meetings throughout the year and around the country, culminating in this 2017 report.

Working Group Committee members included community leaders from the American Civil Liberties Union, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and other organizations with long-standing investments in our criminal justice system. Their diverse and sometimes conflicting perspectives contributed to a productive collaboration on questions that are often emotionally charged but that demand meaningful answers.

Steering Committee members took part in meetings in Kansas City, MI; Philadelphia, PA; Portland, OR, and Austin, TX. They spoke to religious, community and law enforcement leaders, and during these meetings APA members heard anger, frustration and disillusionment about the current state of the criminal justice process. Those discussions helped shape this document.

“We learned a lot from the public during this process,” said APA President David LaBahn. “All of their concerns, suggestions and criticism went into the drafting of *The 21st Century Principles of Prosecution*. As prosecutors our first and foremost obligation is to pursue the evidence, the facts and the law wherever they may lead, without political consideration, and to do so according to the highest standards of ethics and integrity. Our hope is that the release of *The 21st Century Principles of Prosecution* will instill the knowledge of those obligations with the public at large.”

The report outlines methods for handling deadly peace officer use of force cases, and concludes that in order to restore public confidence in law enforcement and prosecutors, peace officer use of force cases must be reviewed and investigated with 1) respect for human dignity; 2) independent investigation and prosecution decision making; 3) responsible transparency; and 4) procedural fairness and justice.

The APA fully expects the Use of Force Project to continue well past its yearlong tenure, and that similarly, this document will continue to be revised and even changed as law enforcement and prosecutors find new and improved mechanisms to enhance the trust in our offices.

The 21st Century Principles of Prosecution can be found on the APAINC.org website:

<http://www.apainc.org/peace-officer-use-of-force/>



The 21st Century Principles of Prosecution
Suggested Copy for Social Media

Twitter:

- Proud to be a part of *21st Century Principles of Prosecution*. #SmartProsecutingin2017
<http://www.apainc.org/peace-officer-use-of-force/>
- Prosecutors across the country join together for *21st Century Principles of Prosecution*
<http://www.apainc.org/peace-officer-use-of-force/>
- @[yourhomeofficeaccount] @APAinc and prosecutors across the country release *21st Century Principles of Prosecution*
<http://www.apainc.org/peace-officer-use-of-force/>
- Prosecutors come together to tackle investigation of peace officer deadly use of force cases.
#SmartProsecuting2017
<http://www.apainc.org/peace-officer-use-of-force/>
- Proud to be involved in *21st Century Principles of Prosecution* investigating deadly peace officer use of force cases
<http://www.apainc.org/peace-officer-use-of-force/>

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- [yourhomeoffice] is proud to be a part of the *21st Century Principles of Prosecution* Deadly Use of Force report. Prosecutors across the country came together for recommendations on investigating and prosecuting deadly peace officer use of force cases. #SmartProsecutingin2017
<http://www.apainc.org/peace-officer-use-of-force/>
- Prosecutors from across the country joined together to create the *21st Century Principles of Prosecution* Deadly Use of Force report. The report offers principles and protocols for District Attorneys' Offices to implement when investigating and prosecuting deadly peace officer use of force cases.
<http://www.apainc.org/peace-officer-use-of-force/>
- [yourhomeoffice] joined prosecutors across the country to create *the 21st Century Principles of Prosecution* Deadly Use of Force report. The report was crafted with the help of law enforcement agencies, civil rights groups, religious leaders, and community advocates.
#SmartProsecutingin2017
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