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For Immediate Release

Panel Releases Report on State Police Academy Incident

An independent review panel commissioned by the West Virginia Department of Military Affairs and Public Safety to study the events associated with injuries allegedly sustained by a trainee during basic police training at the West Virginia State Police Academy recently released its findings on the April incident.

The panel made several recommendations to further enhance safety standards associated with the program, also concluding the following:

- No conclusive determination can be made as to whether (the cadet's) injury was sustained during the boxing activity...or if the injury was either aggravated or substantially inflicted during MAT activity.
- There is no compelling reason to either eliminate or severely limit self defense training...as part of the Basic Police Training Class.

The 11 page report further states, "Undoubtedly, it would not be in the public interest to establish an overabundance of concern for the comfort of trainees as a controlling interest when conducting training..." Additionally, "The panel finds no basis to conclude that decreasing the rigorous nature of the program would accomplish anything other than impair the effective preparation of competent law enforcement officers."

Department of Military Affairs and Public Safety Cabinet Secretary Joe Thornton said, "I would like to personally thank the members of the independent review panel for their time and thorough work reviewing this matter. Proper professionalism related to trainee safety and the rigorous training standards within the State Police will continue to be of paramount importance to this agency. Proper training is one of the single most critical aspects to the success of law enforcement personnel when placed in difficult professional situations. Compromising those preparation efforts does not serve in the best interest of public safety."

According to Secretary Thornton, the panel's recommendations appear consistent with the State Police training mission and the department will study the feasibility of implementing all recommendations.

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The four member review panel consisted of: Lew Brewer, former executive director of the West Virginia Ethics Commission; Amanda Sluss, a forensic psychologist who served a nine month internship with the City of Chicago's Independent Police Review Committee; Tom Tinder, executive director of the WV Bar Foundation; and, Ivin Lee, director of the West Virginia Human Rights Commission.

The full report can be accessed online at www.wvdmaps.gov or an electronic copy may be requested by calling 304-558-2930.

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