

# First black LAPD chief's fate uncertain

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The man hired to restore the Los Angeles Police Department's reputation has convinced the people on the street but not the cop on the beat. Now his job is on the line.

Willie Williams, the city's first black police chief and the only one hired from outside the LAPD in 50 years, also has angered the mayor and the city Police Commission, which warned in 1995 that he was on thin ice.

Williams inherited a department shamed by the Rodney King beating and its failure to control bloody riots that erupted in 1992 after acquittals in the criminal trial of officers videotaped beating King.

Rebuilding confidence in the embattled department was a tall order. But Williams and many city residents say he has delivered.

In a letter requesting a second five-year term as the city's 50th police chief, Williams said

he fulfilled his promise of more patrols in the nation's second-largest city and promotions for minorities and women.

"Due in large part to my efforts, the once-exemplary reputation of the LAPD has been largely restored," Williams wrote.

In a recent Los Angeles Times poll, 66 percent of residents surveyed approve of Williams, compared with 56 percent last June. More than half feel as safe or safer than they did five years ago.

When he took the job in 1992, Williams pledged to adopt reforms recommended by the Christopher Commission, a blue-ribbon panel that chronicled racism and brutality in the department of his predecessor, 14-year Chief Daryl Gates.

Since Williams arrived in Los Angeles from Philadelphia, where he was police commissioner, violent crime has dropped more than

20 percent and complaints against officers dropped from more than 1,300 in 1991 to 602 two years ago.

Mayor Richard Riordan has not commented on whether Williams should be rehired to the \$172,000-a-year post, but they have clashed over the number of new officers needed and a Las Vegas trip Williams took that was paid for by a casino.

Another gripe is that Williams hasn't taken the required law enforcement test, said a veteran officer who spoke only on the condition of anonymity.

"It really goes to the issue of credibility," the officer said. "Here's a guy who is making a tremendous amount of judgments on peace-officers, but he isn't a peace officer."

Williams declined an interview request from The Associated Press for this story.

In 1995, the Police Commission told Will-

iams he could be fired if he didn't improve his management skills and hurry up with policy changes ranging from officer discipline and the use of force to community policing.

Commission members, who are appointed by the mayor, have until April 7 to render their decision, but could make a determination as early as this week. Regardless, the City Council has the final say. Williams' term ends July 6.

His lawyers have already drafted a lawsuit claim they plan to file if Williams isn't given a second term, but they have offered to withdraw it for \$3-million, the Los Angeles Times reported Friday.

The claim alleges the commission used the wrong standards to evaluate Williams' performance and acted with bias, the Times said. It also alleges he was unable to properly do his job because of political pressure from Riordan.



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