

## IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## (San Francisco, CA March 15, 2010) - **Alternate Public Safety Resource Available Now While San Francisco Police Face Cutbacks**

On February 10 the San Francisco Police Chief announced a goal of cutting \$47 million from next year's department budget with certain officer layoffs coming. This amount falls \$23 million short of Mayor Gavin Newsom's call for each department to cut 20% from their proposed budget.

San Franciscans don't have to wait for police services to be cut. They have an option now for increasing police protection in local neighborhoods.

The San Francisco Patrol Special Police are city-chartered and overseen by the Police Commission, but respond to the priorities and needs of merchants and residents who pay for their services, at no cost to taxpayers.

While Patrol Specials are best known for early intervention into minor incidents before they become serious crimes, they have recently stepped up to provide protection in public safety emergencies.

On February 7 Patrol Special Officer Robert Burns disabled a gunman who had already killed one and injured four more bystanders outside of Burn's private client's nightclub in Fisherman's Wharf. Many of his clients and other citizens are recommending that he be awarded a police department medal of valor.

Interest in the Patrol Specials is growing significantly.

There are currently 10 inquiries about employment and two applications for new Patrol Specials that the association has received. With the S.F.P.D. facing layoffs, the Patrol Specials will be able to offer similar public safety employment opportunities to take up the slack in unemployment.

"We're very gratified to find 13 applicants who want to join our force and serve the public," said veteran Patrol Special Samuel Reyes, former President of the Patrol Special Police Officer Association who has served clients in the Hunters Point/Bayview neighborhood for over 35 years. "This is the first time since 1996 that we have had such interest expressed," Reyes confirmed.

Applicants must first submit their package including completion of training required by the Commanding officer of the Police Academy and the Police Chief, and a handgun qualification course at the San Francisco Police Range. The police department then conducts a full background check and issues a final decision, with recommendation that the Police Commission appoint the new officer.

“We need more officers on the streets now to deal with crime,” said Ken King, a residential client of the Patrol Specials in Glen Park, and member of the program steering committee. “The review process needs to be a careful one, but it should also be speedy,” King added.

On March 10 the Board of Supervisors voted to endorse a resolution requesting that the police chief work with the district attorney’s office to enhance penalties against those who attack Patrol Special Police Officers. The unanimity of that vote is significant.

It indicates that the Board understands the importance of sending a strong message to criminals that the Patrol Specials are part of the city’s public safety family who will be protected.

It also signifies that the Board supports the Patrol Specials as one alternative from which citizens can choose in order to add to neighborhood safety.

The current budget crises for the city and police department, makes availability of the Patrol Specials that much more important. It’s a solution that must not be ignored.

“It just makes good business sense to protect my customers and neighbors by hiring a Patrol Special,” says Larry Metzger, a Castro business owner. “These officers have always calmed situations down, acted professionally, and are a neighborhood asset,” he adds.

#### About San Francisco Patrol Special Police

San Francisco Patrol Special Police are the only private neighborhood safety service in the city that is legally permitted to patrol San Francisco's streets as well as private and public locations, under the city's municipal code Sec. 1750, and is on police radio frequencies. Patrol Special Police officers are screened by background checks conducted by the S.F.P.D., are trained annually at the San Francisco Police Academy, and regulated by the Police Commission.

Throughout more than a century-and-a-half of unique neighborhood policing, Special Police have supported the City's public safety needs. Patrol Special Police date their history from 1851, during Gold Rush Days. The force was written into the City Charter in 1856. Special Police have assisted city authorities with controlling historical criminal gangs such as the infamous Hounds of San Francisco. Over the years they also maintained public safety during labor strikes, riots, and natural disasters - including the devastating 1906 earthquake.

Today, Patrol Special Police augment the S.F.P.D. by providing neighborhoods with cost-effective and crime prevention services and safety education. Patrol Special Police resolve disturbances at an early stage with a view toward the welfare of all. Their early intervention and visible presence unburden S.F.P.D. officers to address other law enforcement needs. Patrol Special Police services are financed by private clients who include merchants, professionals, homeowners' associations, individual residents, street fair and special event organizers, government agencies, and other business and private organizations.

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