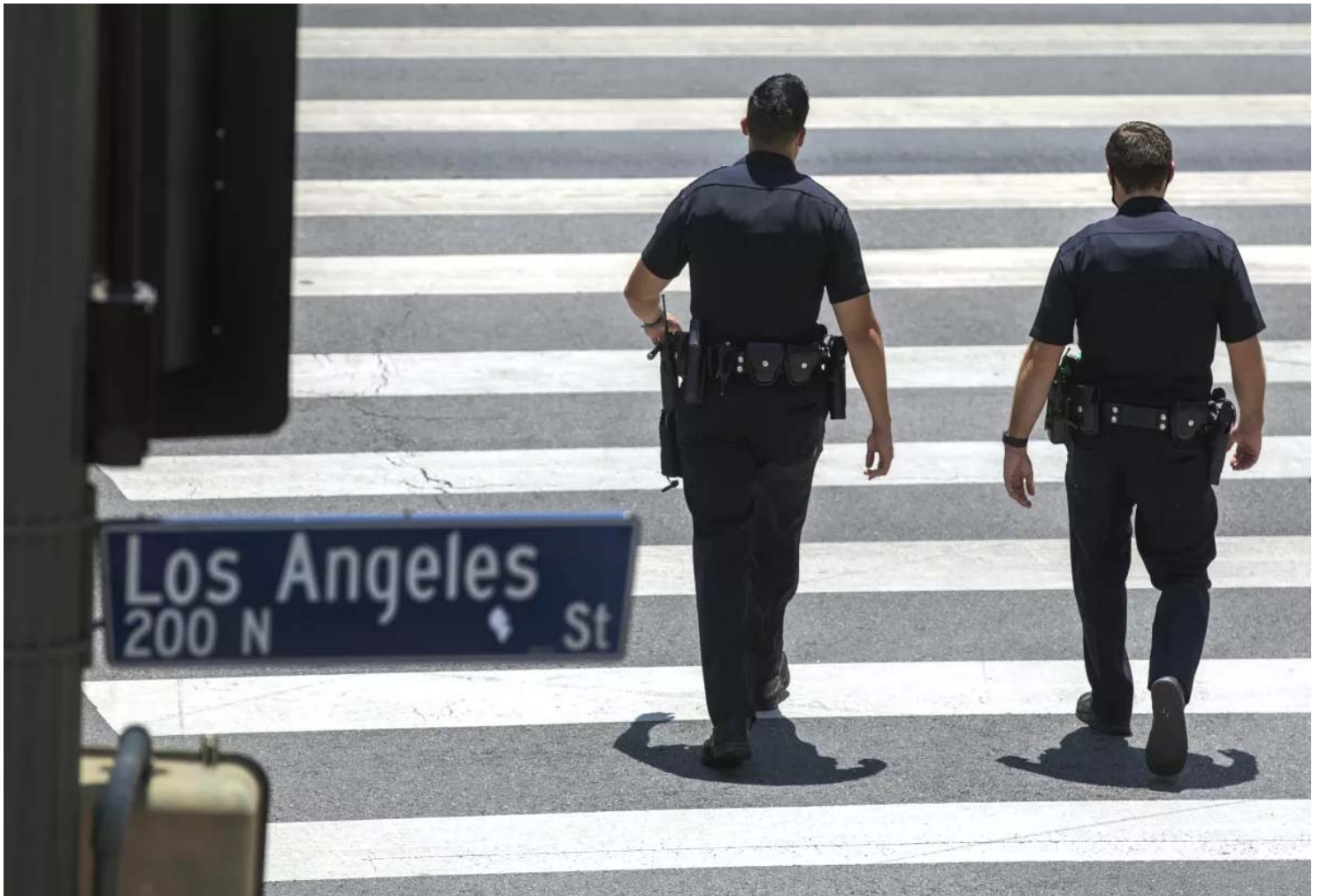




CALIFORNIA

LAPD officers sue owner of anti-cop website for posting photos, 'bounty'



Los Angeles police officers make their way along Temple Street in downtown L.A. Three officers are suing the owner of a website, accusing him of publishing their photos and placing a “bounty” on them. (Mel Melcon / Los Angeles Times)

BY LIBOR JANY, RICHARD WINTON

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Three Los Angeles police officers are suing the owner of [killercop.com](https://www.killercop.com), accusing him of publishing their photos on his website and putting out a “bounty” on them.

It is the first legal action stemming from the Los Angeles Police Department's release of the names and photos of almost every sworn officer — more than 9,300 officers, including some who work undercover — as part of a public records request. A police watchdog group posted the images online last Friday.

The lawsuit, which was filed Friday by the Los Angeles Police Protective League on behalf of Officers Adam Gross, Adrian Rodriguez and Douglas Panameno, asks that the photos and other identifying information be taken down from the killercop.com site.

In a tweet mentioned in the lawsuit, Steven Sutcliffe, who posts under the handle @KillerCop1984, allegedly wrote, “Remember, #Rewards are double all year for #detectives and #female cops.” The tweet included an image of a monetary reward for killing an LAPD officer, the lawsuit says.

According to the suit, a later tweet allegedly included a link to a database of officer photos, along with the caption, “Clean head-shots on these #LAPD officers. A to Z.”

In an interview Friday, Sutcliffe said of the lawsuit, “It's malicious. It's retaliatory. It is vindictive and frivolous. Their motion is filled with lies.”

He added: “They are trying to silence my free speech. The truth cannot be retaliatory. It is 1st Amendment protected speech.”

The information about the officers was turned over by LAPD officials in response to a public records request by a journalist with the nonprofit newsroom Knock LA, then posted by Stop LAPD Spying Coalition, a group that wants to abolish traditional law enforcement but in the interim has pushed for radical transparency.

The “Watch the Watchers” database includes each officer's name, ethnicity, rank, date of hire, division/bureau and badge number, as well as a photo of the officer.

After the site's launch, department leaders revealed that they [inadvertently released photos of officers working in an undercover capacity](#), and they began an internal investigation to determine how the mistake occurred. Sources have said that the undercover officers whose identities were compromised in the release number in the dozens, if not hundreds.



CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles police accidentally release photos of undercover officers to watchdog website

March 21, 2023

LAPD Chief Michel Moore said in an interview on Friday that he supports the league's efforts to have the photos taken down from Sutcliffe's website.

He added that the department was investigating whether the "solicitation for violence against officers" was criminal in nature.

"The posts, the nature of the posts, they're not just intimidation. They're threatening, and they may constitute a crime," he said. "This is one of those things that I worried about and feared when we released these photographs ostensibly to be transparent, that others were going to use them to threaten our officers."

The chief said he has taken steps to address the safety concerns of those whose photos were released.

"We erred in the sense that there's photographs that are in there that should not have been in there," Moore said. "Now, but that ship has sailed. All those photographs are out here. What I find concerning is that as I feared ... actors or individuals who are now taking this information and attempting to intimidate or scare and frighten."

Asked whether he knows of any officers whose covers have been blown or whether any sensitive operations had been disrupted, Moore said, “I’m not aware of any to this point.”

Still, he added, the damage has been done.

“It’s impacting us from a morale standpoint significantly, and from that, it’s very unfortunate,” he said.

The release of the photos has rocked the LAPD. Sources said that it has spurred some officers to consider retirement.

Tom Saggau, a spokesperson for the Police Protective League, which is the union representing rank-and-file officers, said the league plans to pursue legal action against the city and the LAPD.

Dozens of undercover officers are expected to bring a class-action lawsuit against the department, according to attorneys representing those officers.

Saggau said the union is more concerned about the city’s “colossal blunder” than with the journalist who first received the photos or the watchdog group that published them.

“They obtained their info through a PRA [public records request],” he said. “It’s the city’s screw-up that disclosed information that should have never been disclosed, and other sites are exploiting that information and putting bounties on cops’ heads.”

The plaintiffs in the lawsuit against Sutcliffe claim that the alleged threats, combined with their photos being circulated online, have caused them emotional distress.

The three do not work in undercover assignments. Saggau said that Panameno works in the department’s Motor Transport Division. The assignments of the other two officers

were not disclosed.

On Monday, the union filed a formal complaint against Moore and Lizabeth Rhodes, director of the LAPD's Office of Constitutional Policing.

Moore has asked the [inspector general to take over the probe](#) to avoid a conflict of interest.



CALIFORNIA

LAPD chief: Inspector general's office to investigate release of officer photos

March 21, 2023

Multiple LAPD sources not authorized to discuss the photo scandal said Rhodes, who oversaw the photo disclosure, should have ensured that any officer working in an undercover capacity was excluded from the information release.

In a letter to Moore on Thursday, the union's board of directors said it had lost faith in Rhodes, asking the chief to put her on home assignment.

Moore said that he could not discuss the demand, citing personnel matters.

Legal experts say that a judge will have to decide whether the tweets at issue in the lawsuit meet the legal definition of a threat.

That is a separate question from Stop LAPD Spying Coalition's decision to publish the photos, said Aaron Mackey, a staff attorney at the Electronic Frontier Foundation.

The 1st Amendment generally protects the publication of information received from the government, even when it was released by mistake, Mackey said.

LAPD officers may argue that the release of their photos, hire dates and other information is an intrusion on their privacy, but that argument is unlikely to hold up in court, he said.

“They don’t have this reasonable expectation of privacy in this basic information,” Mackey said.

Sutcliffe has run into legal trouble before for online threats. In 2003, he [pleaded guilty](#) in federal court to eight felony charges of using a website he had created to threaten executives at Global Crossing Ltd., a fiber-optic network company in Beverly Hills from which he was twice fired.



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