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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **APDEA Statement on Recent Officer-Involved Shootings**

Any loss of life is tragic. We acknowledge the pain Easter Leafa's family is enduring.

We also acknowledge the immeasurable weight this incident has placed on our officers. We are mothers and fathers; wives and husbands; sisters and brothers. We value life above all else. And we spend the rest of our lives feeling the weight of having to take another's life to defend our own or others. I can tell you firsthand that weight is never lifted.

I am dismayed by what City leaders have said and implied over the past few days. We have little fact-based understanding of what occurred on the night of August 13th, because a robust investigation is currently underway. Our justice system is built upon a gateway step; gather facts before taking further action. Yet many City leaders appear content with calling for action without knowing the facts. That approach does not lend to good policymaking. The investigation has only just begun, and the mayor is apologizing for the actions of an officer that has yet to describe and explain those actions.

We have also heard the oversimplified statement that "six officer-involved shootings since May is far too many" and how that somehow reflects a failure only upon the policing profession. That level of oversimplification does nothing to acknowledge the weight of each of those incidents. Does it acknowledge the civilian who was killed by a suspect outside a downtown bar? Does it acknowledge the significant risks faced by community members when an armed man with a shotgun advanced on officers, and refused to comply with their lawful commands? Does it acknowledge the fact that an armed man refused to comply with officers' lawful orders, after firing a gun, following a domestic disturbance, placing those officers in danger? Does it reflect the fact that in one of these critical incidents the officers were shot at? Does it reflect that each of the officers who acted did so only as a last resort when all other tactics had failed? Does it reflect the weight that each of those officers and their families must bear? Each of these incidents are burdens on us all. And our collective reflection upon each of those incidents must honor the weight they carry for us all as individuals, police officers, and as a community. So, when we talk about "six officer-involved shootings," there is vital information being left out of the narrative.



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The APDEA and its members will always be part of sensible solutions that not only elevate our profession, but also elevate our community and public safety. For years, we've asked the city to invest in our workforce and training. We want to do our best. We strive to do our best. But like any profession, we can only learn and grow when we have real, robust, ongoing training. Policing is a wildly complex profession, and like any profession, we should spend our entire careers being exposed to the most thorough and thoughtful training out there. That's what we want and need. But also know that even the most well-trained professionals can't change outcomes when the entire event was set up for failure from the start.

We have for years called for more investment in our city's social fabric. Help get those who are addicted or suffering from mental illness into treatment. Help them recover and grow. Find new or additional professionals to help us support those most in need. Don't let our social fabric wear so thin that police are left to singularly deal with all of society's ills and failures.

From tragedy comes opportunity. We look forward to actively engaging with all our community partners and City leaders to move our collective communities forward.

The Anchorage Police Department has some of the most professional, educated, highly trained, compassionate officers in the nation. It is unfortunate that our officers have been faced with six critical incidents in a short period of time, but don't let that unfortunate fact diminish your trust in your police department. We will continue to strive to be the best police department in the nation and continue to provide the level of service and commitment to your safety that we always have.

Sincerely,

Darrell Evans  
President, APDEA

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