

## MPRnews

# Minneapolis cop indicted on corruption charges

Elizabeth Stawicki and Brandt Williams Minneapolis, Minn. July 15, 2008 8:30 p.m.



Minneapolis Police Chief Tim Dolan says the department is serious about enforcing professional standards for all officers and he worries about what a high-profile allegation can do to undermine the integrity of police officers. "It's tough when something like this happens, here or anywhere else, because it does reflect upon the badge as a whole," he said. MPR

Photo/Brandt Williams

The three counts of corruption filed against officer Roberts are from two incidents that happened last August.

That's when Roberts met with a man he knew to be a gang member and a criminal. The man, a government informant identified in court documents only as T.T., asked Roberts to use the police database to get non-public information. Both times T.T. gave Roberts \$100.

After the second incident, Roberts says he reported the exchange and put the \$100 into the department's property inventory. But prosecutors say in both cases, Roberts kept the money for himself.

“ He (Officer Roberts) did not solicit any money from this guy.” ”

Outside the federal courthouse, Robert's attorney F. Clayton Tyler says this is a case of entrapment.

"He did not solicit this guy to come to him. He did not solicit any money from this guy," Tyler said. "It was the government, it was the government who was calling this guy and talking to this guy on the phone, asking

Michael to answer questions, while he was with him. That's the informant that is."

Tyler also characterized Roberts as an outstanding police officer, who has served the city well during 27 years on the force.

Roberts' service record is mixed. He's received nine letters of appreciation and several recommendations for awards.

But Roberts has been reprimanded twice and was suspended without pay briefly in 1996. Details of those actions are not available in the public record.

Some of Roberts supporters, like Bill English of the African-American Leadership Summit, say Roberts was particularly helpful to the black community.

He says Roberts and other black officers, serve as a necessary buffer between the community and the department.

"Mike was one of those guys," English said. "Mike was one of those guys that always demonstrated a sensitivity to the community. But was also a no-nonsense guy when it came to dealing with the victims of black-on-black crime."

Late last year, five African-American officers filed a racial discrimination lawsuit against the department and police chief Tim Dolan.

One of the complainants in the suit, Lt. Lee Edwards, is reportedly also under federal investigation.

English is quick to add that if Roberts or Edwards has committed a crime, they should be held responsible. But English says he suspects that discipline is not being dealt fairly across racial lines.

"Half the African American community in north Minneapolis know the bad cops that beat you up for nothing, slam you up against the wall, who harrass black citizens," English said. "We know who they are. But there are never any investigations of their behavior."

Police chief Tim Dolan denies that his disciplinary actions are based on race.

Dolan says in the last two years, 15 officers have been fired or resigned while under investigation. He says the numbers do not disproportionately target officers of color.

Dolan says the department is serious about enforcing professional standards for all officers and the chief worries about what a high-profile allegation can do to undermine the integrity of police officers.

"It's tough when something like this happens, here or anywhere else, because it does reflect upon the badge as a whole," Dolan said. "And it's not a place, I don't think any chief wants to be in."

The indictment of officer Michael Roberts also highlights another color barrier that can complicate matters of police discipline -- that's the so-called blue wall of silence.

Former Minneapolis police officer Mike Quinn says that wall is what keeps some cops from turning in their fellow cops. Quinn wrote a book about his experience on the force.

Quinn says he didn't work directly with Roberts, but he says some cops told him they didn't want to work with Roberts.

"And this is information I got as a supervisor," Quinn said. "I can't remember how his name came up. But typically, if he's lazy, they don't want to work with them if they're good, hard-charging cops. The other reason they don't want to work with somebody is they're doing something unethical or criminal on the job. And they don't want to snitch them off. But they also don't want to get involved in what he's doing."

Meanwhile, Roberts is on paid administrative leave and has to post a \$25,000 bond. Roberts' next court appearance is scheduled for next month.

## Gallery



1 of 1



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