



'Gestapo' reference about checkpoint draws criticism

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POMONA - More than two months after a City Council member used the word "Gestapo" while commenting on a controversial traffic checkpoint, people are still talking about the matter.

The head of the Western Region of the Jewish Labor Committee this week advised the council to use caution when using "Gestapo."

Paul Koretz, executive director of the organization, said that for people like himself who have family members who were taken by the German Gestapo and sent to concentration camps, it is a delicate matter.

"This is a blood-curling analogy," Koretz said. "I would ask you to consider even some sensitivity training."

Councilwoman Cristina Carrizosa used the word at a May 5 council meeting to describe police efforts at a traffic checkpoint two days earlier at Mission Boulevard and San Antonio Avenue.

Carrizosa said later the term was not directed at law enforcement officers, but Pomona police saw it as an attack on them, as have members of other agencies that participated in the checkpoint.

Koretz, a former assemblyman from Los Angeles, said Tuesday he made the visit to Pomona after seeing news stories about the incident.

"I just thought that what was said was insensitive enough and painful enough that someone needed to say something," Koretz said.

Among those who also spoke were the West Covina Police Officers Association president and Tina Pasco, executive director of the Los Angeles chapter of Mothers Against Drunk Driving.

The West Covina Police Officers Association president said he was surprised by the comments made about the traffic-safety program that helped make the checkpoint possible.

The grant-supported program used that day includes the participation of law-enforcement agencies from a coalition of 40 Los Angeles County cities.

The program is effective in addressing situations that contribute to fatal traffic accidents, the West Covina Police Officers Association president said Tuesday.

"It's a great tool we get to keep roads safe for everyone," he said.

In order for any law-enforcement effort to be successful, positive working relationships are required, he said.

"It means having a relationship with the City Council and having a relationship with the public," he said.

Comments like those made May 5 have an impact on the community and on the way residents and law enforcement interact, he said.

Phil Bozoich, president of the Pomona Police Officers' Association, said Tuesday the visit of people from outside the city shows people care.

"I think it shows that not only are leaders of our community concerned, but that leaders of other parts of L.A. County are concerned," he said.

Council members listened to the remarks offered Monday evening without comment, but on Tuesday some shared their reactions.

Carrizosa said the visiting speakers offered "their comments like those many other people have made."

She said she has received nothing but positive response from her constituents who encourage her to continue to pursue the checkpoint issue.

Councilman George Hunter said the use of the term Gestapo is "diminishing the real horror" that the Nazis inflicted. "It's a term not to be used."

To somehow make a connection between the local police and a group that was responsible for the deaths of millions is out of line as was the use of the term, he said.

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