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Chief's trusted aide has a past worth noting

Jim DeFede

Miami Police Chief John Timoney and his commanders have said that if anyone has a complaint about police conduct during the Free Trade Area of the Americas summit, they should report it to the department's Internal Affairs unit.

"If you saw something occurring," Deputy Chief Frank Fernandez said recently, "come forward and tell us."

The man in charge of Internal Affairs is Louis Vega, a longtime friend and trusted aide of Timoney. The two men worked together for many years in the New York City Police Department, and soon after Timoney was hired in Miami he brought Vega in as an assistant chief answering only to him.

A CLOUDED CAREER

Vega's past, however, is not without controversy. He left the NYPD in 1996 amid accusations that as a Bronx precinct captain he falsified crime statistics. Vega allegedly altered information on police reports, often re-classifying crimes from felonies to misdemeanors in order to make it seem there had been a reduction in serious crime in his precinct.

The story made headlines in New York and soon after the allegations came to light, he was removed from his command. Several weeks later, Vega abruptly retired. The New York Daily News reported that Vega "retired during talks between his lawyers and Police Department prosecutors over a plea deal."

By retiring, Vega kept his captain's rank and pension, the News reported. When Vega left, New York Police Commissioner Howard Safir said: "Captain Vega's retirement closes an unfortunate chapter for the NYPD, but it should send a clear message that we will not tolerate deception."

At the time, there was speculation the police brass went after Vega because he was aligned with Timoney, the former second-in-command who had just been passed over for police commissioner. Timoney was so angry at being snubbed, he blasted the new commissioner, Safir, and Mayor Rudolph Giuliani. He then quit the department. Once Timoney was gone, Vega was on his own.

Last week, NYPD officials refused to comment on Vega.

Vega, who did not return calls seeking his comment, reportedly sued the NYPD for defamation. The status of that lawsuit was unknown.

After leaving the NYPD,
police chief in 2001.

headquarters, referring to him as "*Chef* Vega" because he allegedly had "cooked the books" in
stats.

Vega launched into a tirade and, according to sworn statements from
If these fags want to hide behind their memos, so be it."

Chief

Three months later, and still under investigation for using the gay epithet,
Timoney in Miami. According to Hartford's Lt. Neil Vega resigned, the

Timoney refused to discuss

Given his history,
department that for years has been plagued by scandals and is trying to restore public confidence

TO WHOM IS HE MORE LOYAL?

Vega's loyalty is to
second. Can the public really expect anything to come out of Internal Affairs that contradicts the

And more generally, could
Timoney?

Vega is applying to be police chief in Dallas. So maybe he won't be around