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[May 30, 2009]

4th narc gets desk duty in alleged-misconduct probe

May 30, 2009 (Philadelphia Daily News - McClatchy-Tribune Information Services via COMTEX) -- A fourth narcotics officer has been placed on desk duty in connection with an expanding FBI and Internal Affairs investigation into allegations of police misconduct.

Officer Thomas Tolstoy, a 10-year veteran of the force, was taken off the street and forced to relinquish his police-issued weapon late last week, said Internal Affairs Chief Inspector Anthony DiLacqua. DiLacqua cited the ongoing probe but declined to elaborate.

Meanwhile, as the probe enters its fifth month, a growing number of criminal cases have been put on hold in the wake of a Feb. 9 Daily News article that detailed allegations that Officer Jeffrey Cujdik -- Tolstoy's fellow squad member -- lied on search-warrant applications to get into targeted drug homes.

Dozens of search warrants connected to the elite narcotics squad are now in question, forcing drug suspects into legal limbo. Prosecutors have asked judges to postpone open criminal cases involving Cujdik, pending outcome of the FBI and Internal Affairs investigation.

During a court hearing yesterday, Assistant Public Defender Bradley S. Bridge likened the experience to "treading water." Bridge's comment prompted Common Pleas Judge Sheila Woods-Skipper to respond, "I don't know how long the treading will last." Assistant District Attorney Robin B. Godfrey explained that the investigation is "under the control of the federal government" and that she had no idea when it would conclude.

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Bridge is seeking to reopen the cases of 53 convicted drug defendants -- 11 of whom are in prison.

Bridge asked Woods-Skipper to set bail for jailed defendants who are waiting to hear if they can get a new trial.

Bridge agreed to file individual bail petitions in each case by next week. Woods-Skipper set a June 19 date to hear bail motions.

The three other officers on desk duty are: Cujdik, his brother, Richard, and Robert McDonnell.

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