

Fullerton police investigation continues following homeless beating, death



Ron Thomas, the father of victim, Kelly Thomas, stands next to a memorial for his son on Wednesday, Aug. 3, 2011, at the Fullerton Transportation Center in Fullerton, Calif. The parents of Kelly Thomas, a homeless man have demanded the release of a 911 tape and possible surveillance video from a California city, hoping the material will shed more light on what led to a physical altercation last month between police officers and their son, who later died.

| Caitlan Carroll | KPCC

The FBI, the Orange County District Attorney and now an independent auditor are all investigating the Fullerton Police Department. They're looking into six officers involved in last month's beating of a schizophrenic homeless man who died a few days after the beating.

Rusty Kennedy is the executive director of the Orange County Human Relations Commission. He says investigations like the one into the death of Kelly Thomas could take up to two years. "This is something that takes a long time, and it's because our system of government that protects the rights of individuals that it's the right thing to let it take time," Kennedy says. "There won't be any instant gratification available."

The names of the officers involved in the beating have not been released, but an attorney says one of them took part in a violent arrest of 31-year-old Veth Mam last October. The attorney, Garo Mardirossian, says he'll file a federal lawsuit this week that alleges police brutality in Mam's arrest. He says once the paperwork is in, he'll begin the discovery process – and that will let him interview the officer in question. Mardirossian, who also represents Ron Thomas, the father of Kelly Thomas, says information from the investigation into Mam's arrest will be used in the Thomas case.

Ron Thomas has told Fullerton officials that he intends to sue the city for police brutality. He said that if he receives any financial settlement, he'll use it to support homeless services in the north Orange County area.