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Man beaten by Denver officers awarded \$795,000 by City Council

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Alexander Landau was awarded \$795,000 by the Denver City Council. The settlement was over a 2009 traffic stop with Denver police that left Landau bloodied. (THE DENVER POST | RJ SANGOSTI)

A man left bloodied by Denver police officers two years ago after a routine traffic stop was given a \$795,000 settlement by the City Council on Monday.

It is among the largest payouts in city history to resolve a police-brutality case.

Alexander Landau sued the city in federal court,

saying three police officers tried to cover up a Jan. 19, 2009, beating that left Landau scarred and suffering "persisting neurological damage."

The officers hit Landau with their fists, flashlights and a radio, and called him a racial epithet, according to the suit.

Police say Landau reached for one of their guns during a stop for allegedly making an illegal left turn.

Two of the three officers in the suit were recently fired for lying on reports concerning other violent incidents.

"I am so deeply disappointed that this took so long to see the light of day," said Councilwoman Judy Montero. "I wouldn't wish this on any community or any member of our community."

The council unanimously approved the payout.

The department's Internal Affairs Bureau originally reviewed the case but refused to begin a formal investigation.

"That investigation was poorly handled," said Mayor Guillermo "Bill" Vidal, who called the settlement "just."



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Landau's suit includes graphic photos of the bloodied and beaten then-19-year-old college student.

Vidal said "chances were good we would lose this case in court."

The officers named in the suit were Cpl. Randy Murr and Officers Ricky Nixon and Tiffany Middleton. Chief Gerry Whitman was named in his official capacity.

Murr was fired in March for lying on a police report about an incident in Lower Downtown in April 2009 that was caught on videotape, showing officers beating up Michael DeHerrera. Nixon was fired last month for lying in a police report about a violent incident caught on camera outside the Denver Diner in 2009.

The city has reopened an internal-affairs investigation into the case.

"The city is commended for taking responsibility for this senseless beating and racial branding," said Landau's attorney, John Holland, in a statement. "The city has additionally agreed to improve its procedures to ensure that serious complaints of racial discrimination against law enforcement officers are fully investigated, not blown off, as Alex's complaints were."

Over the past few months that Vidal has been mayor, six officers have been dismissed and "several other officers have been significantly suspended," Vidal said.

He said the incidents of police violence are alarming but should be put in perspective.

"Our police officers contact citizens 500,000 times a year," he said. "There are 1,400 officers. This is a big city, and things happen. Certainly, you are going to have bad behavior by some."

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