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PRESS RELEASE

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Federal Jury Awards \$1.6 Million Against Two Las Cruces Police Officers for Excessive Force, Battery and Unlawful Arrest

Las Cruces, New Mexico – A unanimous jury awarded a husband and wife \$1.6 million in a verdict against two Las Cruces Police Department officers Friday in U.S. Federal Court in Las Cruces.

On the evening of January 5, 2013, a neighbor dispute over barking dogs resulted in a woman, Jillian Beck, suffering a broken nose and a fractured wrist - at the hands of Las Cruces Police Officer Isaiah Baker. The federal jury determined that Officer Baker had forcefully thrown Mrs. Beck into her neighbor's rock yard; then, when she lifted her face up off the rocks to cry out to a neighbor to get her 4-year old son away from the scene, Officer Baker intentionally slammed her face back into the rocks. Her husband, Andrew Beck, an active-duty Air Force member then based at White Sands Missile Range, attempted to help his wife who was bleeding on the ground. When Officer Baker lifted Mrs. Beck up off the ground, she was bleeding heavily from her face.

Mr. Beck testified on Tuesday via live feed from an Air Force Base in Qatar that he thought his wife was "choking on her own blood" as she lay face down on the ground with Officer Baker's knee in her back. When Mr. Beck stepped towards his wife, he was detained by Las Cruces Police Officer Joseph Campa.

Another officer had started his hidden recorder just before the take-down, telling his fellow officers he was "going red," which is code for turning on his recorder. Officer Baker could be heard on the audio saying, "She got thrown" and she got a "face full of rocks." A female LCPD officer could be heard saying in response, "Cool." Then the officer recording the event can be heard patting his hidden recorder to let the other officers know he was still recording them. The conversation then ends.

Mrs. Beck was arrested and charged with Battery on a Peace Officer, Resisting, Evading and Obstructing an Officer and Disorderly Conduct. Mr. Beck was charged with Resisting, Evading and Obstructing an Officer for stepping towards his bleeding wife on the ground.

The jury found that Officer Baker had used unreasonably excessive force in violation of Mrs. Beck's 4th Amendment right and committed a battery in violation of New Mexico State law.

The jury also found that Officer Campa had unlawfully seized and arrested Mr. Beck in violation of the 4th Amendment. The jury awarded \$100,000 in compensatory damages to Mr. Beck, and \$500,000 to Mrs. Beck. The jury also awarded \$1,000,000 in punitive damages based on Officer Baker's willful, malicious, wanton and reckless conduct.

"The jury sent a clear message that this type of behavior towards civilians will not be tolerated in our community," said Margaret Strickland, Mr. and Mrs. Beck's attorney. The Becks' attorneys argued to the jury that the "blue wall of silence" had shielded the officers' misconduct and subsequent cover-up for four years.

Attorneys Margaret Strickland and Mollie McGraw with the law firm of McGraw & Strickland, LLC represented Jillian Beck and Andrew Beck in the civil rights case.