

Troop pullout worries KAs

Accidental shooting found in death of Hannam guard

By **Richard Reyes Fruto**
Korea Times

Los Angeles' Korean Americans who bore the brunt of the four-day riots are opposed to the phased state and federal troop withdrawal.

"I think some portion of the National Guard should stay until this thing is settled," said Eui Young Yu, chairman of Koreatown Emergency Relief Committee, a group coordinating recovery efforts. "I don't feel safe right now."

Charles Park, president of the Koreatown Crime Task Force, said he has sought assurances from the Los Angeles Police Department that it will be better prepared to quell disturbances in the immediate future.

Police Chief Daryl Gates said the department has asked the National Guard to be ready to mobilize its units again if needed.

More than 40,000 Army soldiers and 6,000 Guard troops have pulled out, but 1,500 Marines remain on alert at Camp Pendleton near San Diego and about 4,000 Guard troops are stationed in armories and staging areas throughout Southern California.

Meanwhile, police have started investigations into riot-related fatalities, including three people killed in Koreatown on April 30, the second day of the riots.

A police investigation into the death of a security guard at Hannam Superchain has determined a companion defending the grocery store shot him accidentally, a detective at Rampart station said.

Detective Andy Cicoria said Patrick Bettan, 30, was shot in the back of the head when he and Korean men at the store exchanged fire with looters.

According to the coroner's office, Bettan died from a gunshot wound to the head at about 5 p.m. on April 30. No arrests were made.

Cicoria said police will ask the district attorney's office how to handle the case, but he added that it probably will be classified as an accidental shooting, meaning no charges will be filed.

Police also are investigating the death of Hector Castro, 49, who was shot at Vermont and Leeward avenues and taken to an LAPD command post at Third Street and Vermont, where he died.

Police don't know who shot him, or whether he was a bystander, rioter or

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citizen defending a store, Cicoria said.

Bettan's death under friendly fire compounds the tragedy in Koreatown, which already grieved for a Korean American college student who was killed when other Koreans mistook him for a looter.

"It's a very unfortunate situation," Park said. "But frankly, I was very surprised that there was only one Korean person killed in this large-scale riot."

Park said he doesn't want Korean Americans to take up arms again to defend their businesses, as dozens of people did during the riots in Koreatown.

"Everybody agrees the crisis management system as a whole has failed," said Yu, who faults government from the local to the federal levels for the breakdown in law enforcement.

Like many Angelenos, Park and Yu scoffed when Gates said police reviewed contingency plans before the riots and responded accordingly except at Florence and Normandie avenues, scene of a riot seen on television the first night.

"Apparently, they didn't have (a plan)," Yu said.

But Park and Yu said they were less interested in pointing fingers at those responsible and more concerned whether citizens can depend on police in case another wave of violence surges through the city.