

Fort Bragg Police Department

A Report on the Ft. Bragg Police Department

March 14, 2011

Summary

The Ft. Bragg Police Department (FBPD) is centrally located in the town of Ft. Bragg. Budget cuts have impacted FBPD's resources leaving the department short staffed. Additional burdens include officers being subpoenaed by Mendocino County District Attorney's office (MCDAO) to testify in the Ukiah courts.

Methods

On September 29, 2010, the Mendocino County Grand Jury (GJ) conducted a site visit and inspected the FBPD facility, including holding cells, booking area, sally port, and evidence room. The GJ interviewed officers and staff, reviewed the budget and documents, including the Annual Report of Citizens Complaints against Peace Officers.

Background

California Penal Code §919(b) states: "the Grand Jury shall inquire into the condition and management of the Public Prisons within the county". The 2010-11 GJ complied with the State mandate by inspecting the FBPD facility.

Findings

1. Present staff consists of one Chief of Police, one Captain, three Sergeants, and 16 Officers. There are also two Community Service Officers, two Service Technicians, and one Administrative Assistant.
2. On February 10, 2010, there was a 10% reduction in staff resulting in the elimination of one officer position, one Community Service Officer and one Technician. This leaves staff at the 1990 level.
3. Officers are scheduled to work three twelve hour shifts one week, and four twelve hour shifts the next week.
4. FBPD has one canine unit, and is exploring options for obtaining another canine, which would be specialized in drug recognition.
5. Software was created by Mendocino County Information Technical Services (IT) for FBPD to identify dismissed or adjudicated cases using data from the MCDAO.
6. Since the software became available, the evidence room is able to purge unneeded evidence and clear the backlog.
7. A court order is required to release or dispose of evidence that is considered contraband, such as drugs and guns, or other evidence obtained with a search warrant.

8. The FBPD evidence room uses a bar code system to identify evidence, and continues to be current in its disposition of evidence.
9. The FBPD evidence room also serves as storage for the defendant's personal property or lost and found items.
10. The FBPD evidence room now has two blood-drying cabinets, which diminish the chance of cross-contamination of any evidence.
11. Dispatch services continue to be provided by Ukiah Police Department (UPD), thereby increasing available statistical information.
12. The most frequent issues that FBPD deals with are vandalism, transients, and the homeless. Gang activity is limited.
13. FBPD has a booking area available to other law enforcement agencies, such as the California Highway Patrol or California Fish and Game, for a \$50 fee per occurrence.
14. Persons, who are arrested and booked, are transported to Mendocino County Jail in Ukiah; others may be cited and released. Transporting prisoners to Ukiah leaves FBPD short staffed.
15. Misdemeanor cases are handled at the 10-Mile Branch Superior Court in Fort Bragg. Felony cases are handled at the Mendocino County Superior Court in Ukiah.
16. When the MCDAO subpoenas one or more officers to testify, the officers must travel to Ukiah and are required to allot a minimum of four hours, leaving the FBPD short staffed. Cases can be pleaded or dismissed while the officer(s) is in transit.
17. If an officer is in transit between Fort Bragg and Ukiah on Highway 20, there is limited communication by cell phone or radio.
18. FBPD has two police bicycles used to patrol the community and for special events.
19. Officers are encouraged to participate in activities and community service.

Recommendations

The Grand Jury recommends that:

1. the FBPD hire retired officers on a part-time basis to transport prisoners to the Mendocino County Jail. (Findings 14, 16)
2. the FBPD obtain a second K-9 Unit. (Finding 4)

Discussion

The FBPD facilities were found to be neat and well maintained. FBPD continues to operate efficiently even though budget cuts have drastically limited their resources.

Required Responses

Fort Bragg City Council (All Findings; All recommendations)

The Fort Bragg Chief of Police (All Findings; All recommendations)