

BRING BACK THE DOG!

A REPORT ON THE MENDOCINO COUNTY SHERIFF'S FORT BRAGG SUBSTATION

JUNE 9, 2010

Summary

The Mendocino County Sheriff's Office Fort Bragg, (MCSO/FB), Substation and Holding Cells share a County owned facility with the Fort Bragg Police Department. The Grand Jury, (GJ), observed the facility, including the evidence room, holding cells, and perimeter security fencing. The facility was found to be neat, clean, and well-managed.

Due to budget cuts, there are two vacant deputy positions, with no anticipation of being filled within the near future.

The MCSO/FB Substation would like to re-establish the K-9 unit for drug recognition and officer protection. The canine seeks out and locates hidden suspects who may be armed and dangerous.

Background

California Penal Code §919(b) states: "...the Grand Jury shall inquire into the Conditions and management of the public prisons within the county". The MCSO/FB Substation falls within this mandate.

Methods

The 2009-2010 GJ conducted a site visit to the MCSO/FB Substation and holding cells on March 9, 2010. The purpose was to examine the facility and review various documents and reports, including the policy and procedure manual.

Findings

1. The staff includes one Lieutenant, three Sergeants, one Evidence Technician/Office Assistant, nine Deputies, one Animal Control Officer, and one Detective.
2. The Coast has two unfilled Deputy positions; one is the South Coast Resident Deputy and the other would be assigned to the Substation in Fort Bragg.
3. The Evidence Technician/Office Assistant position has been reduced to 32 hours per week.
4. The MCSO/FB Substation no longer has a K-9 unit for officer protection or drug recognition.

5. There is no security camera to monitor the south entrance of the building, including the fenced area securing the parking lot.
6. The communication system has been improved. The system has three main channels: North County, Coast, and Ukiah.
7. The Mendocino County District Attorney has **not** adopted the *Mendocino County District Attorney's Office Disposition-Evidence Release Memo*.
8. Evidence should be released by the Mendocino County District Attorney's Office, (MCDAO), when a case is dismissed or adjudicated. Certain evidence, such as weapons, drugs, and evidence obtained with a search warrant, requires a court order for release.
9. The MCDAO does not notify the evidence room when a case has reached final disposition. This results in an accumulation of evidence that is no longer needed.

Recommendations

The Grand Jury recommends that:

1. the Mendocino County Sheriff fill the two vacant deputy positions. (Finding 2)
2. the Mendocino County Sheriff recruit and train a student to aid in office duties at the Fort Bragg substation. (Finding 3)
3. the Mendocino County Sheriff replace the K-9 unit. (Finding 4)
4. General Services install an additional security camera to monitor the south entrance and fenced parking area. (Finding 5)
5. the Mendocino County Sheriff encourage the Mendocino County District Attorney to adopt and use the *Mendocino County District Attorney's Office Disposition-Evidence Release Memo*. (Findings 7-9)

Discussion

A South Coast Resident Deputy position is critical to this remote area in order to shorten response time, which may be one to two hours.

The Evidence Technician/Office Assistant's hours have been reduced, causing additional backup of unpurged evidence, overcrowding the limited storage space.

Required Responses

Mendocino County Board of Supervisors (All Findings; All Recommendations)

Mendocino County Sheriff (All Findings; All Recommendations)

Mendocino County General Services Director (Finding 5; Recommendation 4)

Mendocino County District Attorney (Findings 7-9; Recommendation 5)