

PREVENTING CRIME IS A PRIORITY

A REPORT ON THE FORT BRAGG POLICE DEPARTMENT

JUNE 9, 2010

Summary

In the interest of public safety, it is important for the Fort Bragg Police Department, (FBPD), to maintain an adequate staff level to provide protection for the community. In February 2010, the department had a 10% reduction in staff, decreasing the number to the 1990 level.

The department would like to increase drug education and anti-gang prevention in the local school system, if additional funds were available.

Funding for a School Resource Officer, who does outreach for crime prevention, is scheduled to end July 2010.

The FBPD was able to reinstate a K-9 unit with a trained dog. The FBPD was selected from 200 law enforcement applicants, because of the bonding between the handler and canine.

The FBPD is often left with minimal staffing due to officers being subpoenaed to testify in the Ukiah Court by the Mendocino County District Attorney's Office, (MCDAO).

Methods

The 2009-2010 Grand Jury, (GJ), visited the FBPD on March 9, 2010, and interviewed officers and staff, and inspected the facilities including the holding cells.

Background

California Penal Code §919(b) states, the "Grand Jury shall inquire into the condition and management of the public prisons within the county".

Findings

1. The FBPD staff consists of: one Chief of Police, one Administrative Assistant, one Captain, three Sergeants, one School Resource Officer, two Police Services Technicians, nine Police Officers, two Community Service Officers, and one Detective, who is presently assigned to the Task Force.

2. In February 2010, there was a 10% reduction in staff, decreasing the number to the 1990 levels.
3. There are two bilingual officers who receive additional pay.
4. One of the three community service officer positions has been frozen.
5. The School Resource Officer funding will end July 2010.
6. The FBPD dispatch services are provided by the Ukiah Police Department.
7. The FBPD reinstated their K-9 unit with a trained dog, donated by an out-of-county law enforcement agency.
8. The booking area is available to other law enforcement agencies for a \$50 fee per occurrence.
9. The average bookings are between 150 and 200 annually.
10. Persons who are arrested and booked are transported to the Mendocino County Jail, usually within two hours; if not booked, they are cited and released.
11. The MCDAO subpoenas multiple officers to testify. Officers must travel to Ukiah and are required to allot a minimum of four hours, leaving the FBPD short staffed.
12. It was reported that habitual offenders are often **not** charged by the MCDAO.
13. The FBPD has an evidence room that may also serve as storage for the defendant's personal property or lost and found property.
14. The evidence room lacks a blood drying cabinet.
15. Evidence should be released by the MCDAO, when a case is dismissed or adjudicated. A court order is required to release weapons, drugs, or any evidence obtained with a search warrant.
16. The Information Technology Department created a software program to list dismissed and adjudicated cases using data from the MCDAO records.
17. Since the software report has become available, the evidence room is able to purge unneeded evidence and clear the backlog.
18. The District Attorney has **not** adopted the *Mendocino County District Attorney's Office Disposition-Evidence Release Memo*.
19. Officers are encouraged to be involved in community service activities. Some recent events include the Scout-O-Rama, Safe Communities Day, Lion's Carnival, Safety Day, and the Police Activity League Bicycle Rodeo.

Recommendations

The Grand Jury recommends that:

1. the Fort Bragg City Council request asset forfeiture funds from the District Attorney to temporarily fund three community service officers. (Finding 4)
2. the Fort Bragg Unified School District request asset forfeiture funds from the District Attorney to temporarily fund the position of school resource officer. (Finding 5)

3. the District Attorney fund anti-drug and gang prevention programs in all Mendocino County School Districts using asset forfeiture funds for the 2010-2011 School Year. (Finding 5)
4. the Fort Bragg Police Department use asset forfeiture funds to purchase a blood drying cabinet. (Finding 14)
5. **the Mendocino County District Attorney notify all evidence rooms of case disposition immediately upon resolution.** (Finding 15)
6. the Mendocino County District Attorney adopt and use the *Mendocino County District Attorney Disposition-Evidence Release Memo*. (Finding 18)

Discussion

In the interest of public safety, it is important to maintain an adequate staff level to provide protection for the community of Fort Bragg.

The department would like to do more drug education and anti-gang prevention in the local school system, if additional funds were available. The MCDA's asset forfeiture fund balance is in excess of \$800,000.

Required Responses

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

Mendocino County District Attorney (Findings 11-12, 15-16, 18;
Recommendations 1-3, 5-6)

Mendocino County Office of Education, Superintendent (Finding 5;
Recommendations 2-3)

Fort Bragg Chief of Police (Findings 1-17, 19; Recommendation 4)

Fort Bragg City Council (Finding 4; Recommendation 1)

Fort Bragg Unified School District Superintendent (Finding 5; Recommendation
2-3)