

FORT BRAGG POLICE DEPARTMENT AND HOLDING CELL

November 3, 2005

Summary

In accordance with duties required, the Grand Jury visited the Fort Bragg Police Department (FBPD), the department office, and a holding cell on the adjoining property of the Mendocino County Sheriff's Department.

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 Grand Jury also has a general authority to review city affairs under Penal Code §925 (a). The 2005/2006 Mendocino County Grand Jury undertook their charge with a visit to the FBPD and Holding Cell.

Methods

On two occasions the Grand Jury interviewed members of the FBPD and made an on-site visit to the Department. A visit to their Cypress Street station and the adjoining holding cell situated next door at the facility managed by the Mendocino County Sheriff's Department was performed.

Findings

1. The FBPD web-site is up and operational at the time of inspection and continues to be expanded and developed.
2. The FBPD is staffed in accordance with its budget: one Chief, one Lieutenant, four Sergeants, ten Patrol Officers, two Community Service Officers (CSO) (one position is vacant), six Cadets, two Police Service Technicians (one is an Evidence Room Technician), and an Executive Secretary.
3. The FBPD staffing is affected by the number of officers on temporary disability.
4. Officer retention rates within rural communities such as Fort Bragg are affected by family circumstance and needs.
5. Dispatching for the FBPD is performed through a contract with the Sheriff's Department.
6. A high level of cooperation exists between the commanders of the FBPD and the Mendocino County Sheriff's Coast Sector Sub-Station.
7. Additional safeguards for the disposal of evidence are to be implemented.
8. Injury claims on the part of the patrol officers have been reduced by 30% with the introduction and appropriate use of Tasers.
9. The FBPD holding cell is physically located in the Mendocino County Sheriff's Coast Sector Sub-Station.

10. The Fort Bragg Holding facility lacks an audio monitoring system, resulting in non-compliance with California Code of Regulations §6031.
11. Transportation of prisoners to Ukiah or another facility is generally carried out within two hours.
12. The FBPD estimates that 75% to 80% of arrests are drug-related (methamphetamine or other drugs).

Recommendations

The Grand Jury recommends that:

1. the Mendocino County Department of Building and Grounds install an audio monitoring system in the FBPD Holding Cell that is in compliance with California Code of Regulation §6031. (Finding 10).

Comments

The FBPD continues to perform well in the face of financial adversity. The Department is able to provide the necessary services and protection for their community but would like to be able to do more with education and prevention within the local school systems. The FBPD is looking for grant funding to carry out special projects and making special efforts to find affordable housing for police personnel.

In the course of this investigation the Grand Jury learned that a Fort Bragg Emergency Plan is in place; this is a component of the Mendocino Emergency Services Authority plan which involves all city and County emergency agencies. A tsunami plan for Fort Bragg and environs is currently under development. The Grand Jury believes that city residents should be familiar with the details of these plans, and that the City needs to facilitate this familiarity.

Response Required

Fort Bragg City Council, Finding 2, 10
Police Chief, FBPD, Findings 1 through 12 and Recommendation 1

Response Requested

Director, Mendocino County General Services, Finding 10 and Recommendation 1