



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO
REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL

DATE ISSUED: Nov. 13, 2006 REPORT NO. 06-171

ATTENTION: Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Committee
Agenda of November 16, 2006

SUBJECT: Informational Report from the San Diego Police Department
regarding 2006 Year in Review/Looking Forward

SUMMARY

THIS IS AN INFORMATION ITEM ONLY. NO ACTION IS REQUIRED ON THE PART OF THE COMMITTEE OR THE CITY COUNCIL.

BACKGROUND

At the close of every year, the San Diego Police Department reviews its performance for the outgoing year, acknowledging its accomplishments and critiquing its weaknesses. In 2006, the Department saw a welcome increase in technology and equipment, but struggled against an increasing recruitment and retention dilemma that brought its staffing levels to the lowest in recent years.

Violent crime, which has been a significant focus of the Department, fell for the 3rd year in a row, due in large part to the hard work and dedication of the many units that makeup the San Diego Police Department.

In our role as a critical service provider, we constantly assess our overall performance and level of service we provide to the citizens of San Diego. We are always looking for innovative and effective ways to improve efficiency, deliver emergency services faster and increase public safety and security. With strong support from the Mayor's Office, City Council, and the Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Committee, the Police Department is confident that we will remain one of the most effective and efficient police organizations in the nation.

DISCUSSION

Improvements to Department Efficiency

The following programs and equipment were facilitated, in large part, by the continued support of the PS&NS Committee.

- Helicopters
- Mid City Surveillance Cameras

- Personal Communications Technology (PDA)
- Vehicle Fleet Replacement
- Tasers/CRT(Critical Response Team)

A fleet of four new Eurocopter ASAR Police Helicopters has been procured to replace our aging police fleet. These advanced helicopters will significantly improve the overall effectiveness of the Air Support Unit.

A crime problem in a Mid City Park was addressed by placing two wireless pole mounted surveillance camera systems in the immediate area. These cameras, completely grant funded, allow police to monitor illegal activity in the area and helped create a sense of safety and security for families using the park.

Handheld Computers, or PDAs, have significantly improved the effectiveness of select units in the field. Officers now have the ability to check license plates, run DMV Records, access Mug shot photo databases, and interface with online warrant systems in real time, on the spot. The built-in 1-mega pixel camera gives an officer the ability to snap pictures on scene, or take video clips. An officer can record audio conversations as well, which are stored as sound files. Approximately 75 field officers were issued the Handheld Computers, with more to follow in the immediate future.

Providing 24/7 police coverage citywide requires a fleet of vehicles that can be driven constantly and sometimes under the most adverse of conditions. Ninety new Crown Victorias entered the police fleet in 2006.

The Critical Response Team (CRT) was developed to provide a coordinated less lethal team response to subdue violent subjects. These selected officers received two weeks of special training and were issued a variety of less lethal equipment. One of the primary tools used by the four hundred member CRT is the X26 Taser. This handheld electronic device uses 50,000 volts of electricity to immobilize violent subjects, allowing officers to take them safely into custody. CRT has proven to be an invaluable asset when confronting violent individuals.

Recruitment and Retention

Law enforcement is facing a unique challenge in the recruitment and retention of law enforcement personnel. Several factors, such as the war in Iraq, changing demographics and a healthy job market have decreased the available pool of individuals desiring public service while the demand for police services is increasing. Law enforcement organizations throughout the country are competing for basically the same small group of individuals. The San Diego Police Department has developed an extensive Recruitment and Retention plan, which outlines a winning strategy and makes several viable recommendations to increase the pool of qualified applicants and retain its current personnel.

Crime

Gang violence continues to be a major public concern and focus of this Department. In San Diego, there are currently over 4,000 people identified and documented as gang members under the California Attorney General's Guidelines for Street Gangs. This group of individuals is responsible for some of the most serious crimes in San Diego. Selective enforcement, gang injunctions, and stay away orders are some of the tools used to send a strong message to the gang community that violence will not be tolerated and enforcement will be swift and continuous. Concerted efforts by members of the Gang Unit and Patrol Divisions have made a measurable impact on gang violence.

Two horrific crimes, which garnered extensive media attention, were quickly solved and most of the suspects apprehended due to the tireless efforts of investigators and active community involvement. One of the crimes involved the severe beating of several individuals due to their sexual orientation and the other was the tragic sexual assault and robbery of several college students. Community members can rest assured that the Police Department makes crimes of this nature their highest priority and will ultimately bring individuals committing these types crimes to swift justice.

Overall violent crime is down approximately 1 percent over the same period last year, continuing a steady decrease since 2003. The Department continues to address the safety needs of the community while focusing on investigating, capturing and incarcerating violent criminals.

Partnerships

The San Diego Police Department, as a facilitator, has partnered with the United Way, private businesses and countywide care providers to address the issues of homelessness. The PS&NS was presented a Plan to End Chronic Homelessness in the San Diego Region by a broad coalition of involved parties, including the Police Department. With the support of the PS&NS Committee, the Plan was forwarded to the City Council where it was unanimously approved. This plan will detail successful methodology for selecting an implementation group, which will develop and implement the Plan to End Chronic Homelessness.

The San Diego Police Department looks forward to serving the community in the new year to come and will meet any challenges, new or old, with the same dedication, resilience and commitment to excellence that has made this one of America's Leading Police Departments.

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