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# **NEAT, CLEAN AND ORGANIZED**

## **A Report on the Fort Bragg Police Department**

May 13, 2009

### ***Summary***

The 2008-09 Grand Jury visited the Fort Bragg Police Department (FBPD) and found the department fully-staffed and well-managed.

### ***Methods***

The Grand Jury viewed the vehicles and toured the facility, including the evidence room, the holding cell, and all other areas. Jurors interviewed officers and staff.

### ***Background***

Under California Penal Code § 925a, the Grand Jury has a general authority to review city affairs. The 2008-09 Grand Jury undertook this charge in visiting the Fort Bragg Police Department.

### ***Findings***

1. The department has 24 approved positions. Current employees consist of the Chief, one lieutenant, three sergeants, twelve officers (nine men and three women), two community service officers and four support staff. This constitutes a full staff. One community service officer position is frozen due to budget restrictions.
2. There is one bilingual officer who receives a pay incentive for his language skills.
3. One school resource officer (SRO) gives lectures and staff training at all Fort Bragg schools concerning safety issues and avoidance of drugs and gang involvement.
4. All new hires are subject to an 18-month probationary period.
5. The department does not have a K-9 unit due to budget constraints.
6. There is no mandatory counseling for officers who have experienced a traumatic event unless job performance is affected.
7. The department does not publish an annual report.
8. The policy and procedure manual is currently being updated.
9. Some officers complete "Train the Trainer" taser school and then provide in-house training to the others.
10. A police cadet program is being developed for youth ages 16 to 20.
11. There is a citizen ride-a-long program.
12. The County Sheriff's Office handles all dispatching for FBPD.

13. Due to the lack of an animal control officer in Fort Bragg, increased officer time is required to handle animal issues.
14. FBPD patrol cars do not have on-board computers or cameras.
15. The holding cell is in compliance with Titles 15 and 24 of the California Code of Regulations which set minimum standards for local detention facilities and are enforced by the Corrections Standards Authority of the State Department of Corrections.
16. Each officer is assigned a patrol car and takes the car home at night with the exception of one officer who lives out of the area.
17. Each officer is assigned to keep their car clean. The City of Fort Bragg Public Works Department performs regular vehicle maintenance.
18. State funding for forensics and bookings is scheduled to end this year.

### ***Recommendations***

The Grand Jury recommends that Fort Bragg Police Department:

1. assign a bilingual officer to each shift. (Finding 2)
2. continue to provide training to all SROs prior to assignment. (Finding 3)
3. pursue funding for a K-9 unit. (Finding 5)
4. mandate and provide counseling whenever an officer experiences a job-related traumatic event. (Finding 6)
5. continue to seek funding for the forensics and bookings programs. (Finding 18)
6. pursue funding for the purchase of onboard computers and cameras for the patrol cars. (Finding 14)

### ***Discussion***

The Fort Bragg Police Department facility and grounds were very clean, neat and well-organized. There was complete cooperation and the Grand Jury was welcomed to look at everything.

### ***Required Responses***

Fort Bragg Chief of Police (All Findings; All Recommendations)

Fort Bragg City Council (All Findings; All Recommendations)

Fort Bragg City Manager (All Findings; All Recommendations)

# **FORT BRAGG SUBSTATION AND HOLDING CELLS**

## **A Report on the Mendocino County Sheriff's Fort Bragg Substation**

May 13, 2009

### ***Summary***

The Grand Jury visited the Mendocino County Sheriff's Substation in Fort Bragg and found it to be well-staffed and well-managed. Despite repeated requests for an efficient bar coding system, the evidence room staff must still document and track evidence manually. This contributes to an abundance of backlogged material evidence awaiting clearance and proper disposal.

### ***Methods***

The Grand Jury toured the facility, including the evidence room and the holding cells. The vehicles were inspected and the personnel interviewed on site.

### ***Background***

California Penal Code states ... *The Grand Jury shall inquire into the condition and management of the public prisons within the county* [§ 919(b)] and ... *The Grand Jury shall investigate and report on the operations, accounts and records of the officers, departments or functions of the county* [§ 925]. On February 19, 2009, the Grand Jury undertook this charge by touring the Fort Bragg Substation, including the holding cells and evidence room.

### ***Findings***

1. The Fort Bragg Substation is staffed by one lieutenant, one secretary who doubles as the evidence room tech, two sergeants and eight deputies (one is a trainee). The patrol area for the Fort Bragg office is the Navarro River Bridge to the north county line. The substation is also responsible for the south coast area which runs from the Navarro River Bridge to the south county line. South coast is staffed by one resident sergeant and one deputy.
2. There is a large screen telecommunications system where an early morning briefing is held each day with connections between the Sheriff's Office in Ukiah and the Willits Substation.
3. There are two holding cells at the Fort Bragg Substation. The inmate(s) are observed every 15 minutes.
4. The policy of the Sheriff's Office is to hold inmates for no longer than two hours and then transport them to Ukiah.
5. A deputy from the Fort Bragg Substation transports prisoners as far as the Willits Substation where they are picked up by an inland deputy to complete the trip to Ukiah.

6. Prisoners are brought from Ukiah for court in Fort Bragg and are kept in the substation's holding cells.
7. There is one bilingual officer who receives additional pay for his language skills.
8. All deputies are POST certified (Peace Officer Standards and Training). They attend a POST academy for six months training. The local academies are located in Santa Rosa, Chico and Eureka. The training is normally paid for by the individual but the department can sponsor someone as well. The cost of training is approximately \$6,000.
9. All of the officers carry tasers. Two were trained at a "Train the Trainer" taser school and then they trained the others.
10. Tasers are worn on the opposite side from the handgun to prevent accidental shootings.
11. New officers are on probation for one year.
12. The Sub-Station currently has no K-9 unit for officer protection and drug "sniffing." It had one in the past and officers would like to reinstate it.
13. Only the south coast officers take their cars home when off duty.
14. Each patrol car at the Fort Bragg Substation is shared by two officers who are responsible for keeping it washed and clean.
15. The patrol cars have cameras but no computers. The camera data are downloaded to disc at the end of the shift.
16. There is a ride-along policy allowing civilians to ride with patrol officers.
17. The State Corrections Standards Authority visits the substation, without notice, on a biennial basis. Other inspections of the substation are done by the Fire Marshall and OSHA.
18. The County Sheriff's Office in Ukiah handles all dispatch.
19. The deputies on the north coast work ten hour shifts with no overlap. There is no coverage for a four-hour period. The south coast coverage varies; however, there is always someone on call.
20. The evidence room has no computerized system for tracking evidence. A card system is still in use. For approximately 17 years the substation has requested a bar coding system. The Grand Jury noticed an abundance of backlogged material evidence awaiting clearance and proper disposal.
21. Confiscated firearms are destroyed in an Oakland foundry. Drugs and other hazardous materials are taken to a multi-agency purging area in San Francisco.

### ***Recommendations***

The Grand Jury recommends that the Mendocino County Sheriff's Office:

1. seek funding for a canine unit for the Fort Bragg Substation. (Finding 12)
2. implement a bar-coding system for evidence record keeping. (Finding 20)