



El Paso Police Department

Mayor
Dee Margo

May 23rd, 2018

Lt. Ricardo Porras, Jr.
Auto Theft Task Force Commander
El Paso Police Department
Assigned 2015

City Council

District 1
Peter Svarzbein

District 2
Alexsandra Annello

District 3
Cassandra Hernandez

District 4
Sam Morgan

District 5
Dr. Michiel R. Noe

District 6
Claudia Ordaz Perez

District 7
Henry Rivera

District 8
Cissy Lizarraga

City Manager
Tommy Gonzalez

ABTPA Division Director: Bryan Wilson

ABTPA was created by the 72nd Texas legislature in 1991 to combat motor vehicle theft and burglary. The El Paso Police Department's (EPPD) Auto Theft Task Force (ATTF) was created the following year in 1992. The EPPD ATTF is one of the taskforces that is awarded grant funding from ABTPA. The taskforce is required to report progress and activities on a quarterly basis to ABTPA. The current statutory required performance measures include the recovery of stolen vehicles, the clearance rate of assigned cases, and the arrests of individuals for motor vehicle theft and burglary.

The Sunset Advisory Commission Staff Report included a recommendation to authorize ABTPA grant recipients to use funds to, "Combat a broader range of motor vehicle crimes, such as title and odometer fraud, beyond just automobile burglary and theft." If this statute is modified to include other motor vehicle crimes, the taskforce is going to need additional resources in order to continue to combat motor vehicle theft and burglary, as well as pursuing criminal violations of statutes listed in Section 1001.002(b), of the Transportation Code.

El Paso, Texas is the sixth largest city in Texas and is the largest metropolitan area along the Texas-Mexico Border. El Paso has a combined metropolitan population of approximately 2,500,000 people. El Paso, Texas borders Ft. Bliss, Texas (One of the largest military bases in America.); Two New Mexico Counties: Dona Ana County and Otero County; and Juarez, Mexico. El Paso has four International Ports of Entry. Taskforce operations frequently involve multi agency collaborations and joint operations with Municipal, State, and Federal authorities of the mentioned jurisdictions.

If the statute is modified, it will have a significant impact on taskforce investigations. Additional detectives would be required to fulfill the expectations of the new statutory requirements as they pertain to criminal investigations. In addition to more investigators, the taskforce would need additional vehicles, fuel, equipment, and work computers to allow the new detectives to fulfill their assigned police duties.

Additional resources and support would be required to meet the proposed recommended changes and to address shortfalls that the taskforce is currently experiencing. I have listed a few examples of issues that are being experienced by the taskforce because of the current lack of resources.

Gregory K. Allen, Chief of Police
911 | N. Raynor | El Paso, Texas 79903 | (915) 212-4000

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El Paso Police Department

- The current inventory of grant bought desktop computers are old and outdated. One of the issues attributed to the current ABTPA bought computers is that if they are rebooted, for whatever reason, the power supplies burn out. The computers are so old that the manufacturer no longer makes replacement parts and there are no funds through the police department to buy replacement computers.
- The taskforce currently has two portable working license plate readers (LPR's) for the entire population of 839,000 people who live in El Paso, Texas. The LPR's are used to detect stolen vehicles that may be stationary or being driven to the Mexico Border. The taskforce previously had eight working LPR trailers that were purchased with Homeland Security Funds. Unfortunately, the technology on the trailers have become obsolete and have rendered the trailers useless. The concept behind the trailers was to deploy the trailers to major corridors within the city to be able to monitor traffic, particularly stolen vehicles travelling through the corridors. The LPR trailers would then transmit a notification to a laptop or smartphone with real-time information that the taskforce could act upon and make a recovery of the stolen vehicle. The lack of being able to acquire functioning LPR trailers has put the taskforce at a disadvantage as it relates to motor vehicle thefts.
- The taskforce has one bait vehicle that has an outdated tracking system. The tracking relay finally gave out, after a few years of consistent maintenance by one of our own taskforce officer's that has an electronics background. It has caused the taskforce electronic technician to hardwire a kill switch that prevents the bait vehicle from being started when it is deployed. The issue with this is, by law, the would-be thief can only be charged with the crime of Attempted-Theft of Vehicle. An offense lower than the actual crime of theft of vehicle.

In conclusion, if the statue is modified as recommended by the commission, it will cause the need for more taskforce personnel, vehicles, fuel, equipment, and work computers. I understand this to be with no additional funding for investigator salaries and equipment. Additional support and financial resources would be crucial for ABTPA, in order for the resources to trickle down to the taskforce. This would allow the correction of the current equipment deficiencies. It would also alleviate any concerns of additional personnel and equipment that will be needed to fulfill the new proposed statutory requirement.

I agree with the Sunset Commission's Staff recommendation to continue the ABTPA. It will allow the El Paso Police Department's Auto Theft Task Force to continue serving the local metropolitan area in matters pertaining to automobile crimes.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ricardo Porras Jr." followed by a date "1-18-02".

Lt. Ricardo Porras, Jr.