



POLICE DEPARTMENT

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SAN DIEGO
COUNTY GRAND JURY

July 21, 2006

The Honorable Janis Sammartino, Presiding Judge
San Diego Superior Court
P.O. Box 122724
San Diego, CA 92112

Dear Judge Sammartino:

Response to Grand Jury Report: "Felony Warrants – The Unsolved Problem"

On June 1, 2006, the San Diego County Grand Jury filed the above-entitled report with the Clerk of the Court. The Grand Jury's report contained four (4) "Findings" and seven (7) "Recommendations" directed in part to all Mayors, County Board of Supervisors, Chiefs and the Sheriff in San Diego County. The following response to the Grand Jury report is on behalf of Mayor Stephen Padilla and Police Chief Richard P. Emerson for the City of Chula Vista.

Following are the Grand Jury's four (4) findings with the responses of the City of Chula Vista:

Finding 1) Currently, little or no progress is being made in the rate of apprehension of defendants with outstanding felony warrants in San Diego County.

Chula Vista disagrees in part with the finding. There is currently a full time Chula Vista Officer assigned to the San Diego Regional Fugitive Task Force (SDRFTF). Additionally, for over a year, the Chula Vista Police department has deployed a proactive team, on an overtime basis, to areas in the City where the largest concentration of criminal activity occurs and frequent felony warrant arrests are made. Patrol Officers receive bulletins on nearly a daily basis of wanted suspects and suspects wanted for outstanding felony warrants.

Finding 2) The Grand Jury finds that this computer program (E-Warrants- offered free to San Diego law enforcement agencies), if used by City and County law enforcement agencies, would definitely increase apprehension of persons with multiple felony warrants. However, some municipalities still do not choose to take advantage of this program.



Chula Vista disagrees in part with the finding. While the general finding may be accurate in that some municipalities still do not choose to take advantage of this program. It would not be accurate to include the Chula Vista Police department among those agencies. The Chula Vista Police department has received training in this system and is actively bringing the technology on line to make this resource available to every officer in the field.

Finding 3) More informative outreach must be considered by the San Diego Law Enforcement community, such as publication of photos of wanted criminals in neighborhood newspapers, or following the State of Missouri successful program of roadside billboards showing large photos of wanted felons with multiple outstanding Felony Warrants. The community response to this effort was outstanding.

While Chula Vista agrees that it is essential that all agencies evaluate new and creative ways to enhance the ability to apprehend wanted persons, Chula Vista disagrees that billboards would be an effective method in accomplishing this task. The cost and associated resources needed to remain current with the high turnover and volume of wanted felons would make this program less effective than other options. While the concept of billboards may be effective in less populated regions or areas that have comparatively low numbers of wanted persons, this program would prove less successful in San Diego County.

Finding 4) The Grand Jury found that every law enforcement agency in San Diego County has been contacted by the United States Marshal's office and invited to join their San Diego Regional Task Force. Currently, only the San Diego Sheriff's office has responded positively with the assignment of several deputies to assist with the Felony Warrant apprehension and other activities.

The City of Chula Vista disagrees wholly with this finding. The Chula Vista Police Department has contributed one full time officer to the United States Marshal's San Diego Regional Task Force since 2003.

Regarding the "**Recommendations 06-71 thru 06-76**" by the Grand Jury, the City of Chula Vista and Police Department offer the following responses:

06-70 Consider the significant benefits of joining the San Diego Regional Task Force. This includes outstanding Felony Warrant apprehension already established under the auspices of the San Diego office of the United States Marshal.

The City of Chula Vista recognizes the benefit of participating in the San Diego Regional Task Force and has had an officer assigned to the Task Force since 2003.

06-71 That one officer, from each law enforcement agency, be assigned full time to this task force.

An officer has been assigned full-time since 2003.

06-72 Create a database to search all applications presented for any governmental assistance, benefit or privilege. This would include, but not be limited to, all applicants for driver's licenses, veteran's benefits, worker's compensation, unemployment benefits, professional licenses, all vehicle registrations, and other applicable sources.

This recommendation will require further analysis and may be unworkable for a variety of legal reasons. A Committee would need to be formed from all the relevant law enforcement agencies in the County including the specific agencies listed in this recommendation.

06-73 Fund San Diego law enforcement agencies programs of "Wanted" billboards.

The recommendation will not be implemented. The cost and associated resources needed to remain current with the high turnover and volume of wanted felons would make this program less effective than other options.

06-74 Install the E-Warrant computer program in Patrol Vehicles of all community Law Enforcement Agencies in San Diego County and San Diego City.

The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. The Technology Unit of the Police Department has been actively moving forward with this recommendation for the past several months. Currently the "E-Warrant" program is available to dispatchers and other members of the department and we fully expect to have this same access in patrol vehicles within the next 90 days.

06-75 Sponsor legislation that will provide law enforcement agencies with additional tools to apprehend felons through integration of information from DMV, Social Security, Veterans pensions and other state and federal agencies.

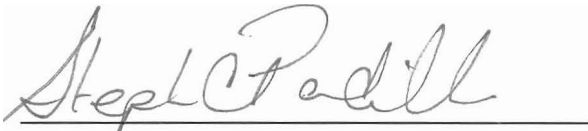
As stated under 06-72 above, this recommendation will require significant analysis and may be unworkable for a variety of legal reasons. If pursued appropriate legislation would be supported.

06-76 Give apprehension of outstanding Felony Warrant offenders a greater priority than currently appears to be the norm.


This recommendation will require further analysis. The Police Department constantly evaluates its programs and resources and allocates the resources on a broad spectrum of priorities and public needs. As previously stated, the Chula Vista Police Department is actively engaged with the United States Marshal's Regional Task Force. Additionally officers are provided 'look out' bulletins on nearly a daily basis of wanted suspects. Currently, our technology is moving forward in the direction of providing real time information to officers in the field to help identify and arrest wanted suspects. The Chula Vista Police Department currently provides a web link via the Police department web site allowing citizens to run warrant checks on wanted suspects in San Diego County. While all officers are encouraged to actively seek wanted fugitives, it is always in the context of other competing priorities in response to community needs.

Additional data on specific issues contained in this report is available upon request.

Sincerely,



Stephen C. Padilla
Mayor City of Chula Vista



Richard P. Emerson
Chief of Police