



City of San Antonio

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Title: Briefing on SAPD Investigative Process [Presented by William McManus, Chief of Police]

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DEPARTMENT: Police Department

DEPARTMENT HEAD: William P. McManus, Chief of Police

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: Citywide

SUBJECT:

Briefing on SAPD Investigative Process

SUMMARY:

The investigative process is the most critical component of the San Antonio Police Department’s strategy to demonstrate its commitment to solve and prevent crime throughout the city. The process is comprised of investigations into suspected criminal activity in response to proactive department efforts and input from the community, intelligence gathering following the commission of a criminal act through interaction with victims and witnesses, the coordination of relevant services, information and resources to address the immediate and long-term needs of victims and their families, the identification, collection and analysis of evidence and the identification and apprehension of suspected criminals. The investigative process relies on continued collaboration and communication among the various SAPD units, victims of crime and community stakeholders to ensure the efficient completion of investigations.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

It is important to note that while the investigative process consists of standard procedures irrespective of the specific crime that is committed, the duration of an investigation may vary significantly based on the type of crime being

investigated and the specific characteristics of each individual case. Over the last several years, the Department has implemented several modifications to the investigative process to enhance its interactions with victims and witnesses and ensure cases are resolved as quickly as possible.

Enhancements

Walking of Domestic Violence Warrants/Crisis Response Team Implementation

In an effort to expedite the apprehension of individuals who committed acts of domestic violence, Chief McManus implemented a policy which required the immediate arrest or issuance of an arrest warrant for these individuals. In addition, the Department created a Crisis Response Team solely dedicated to facilitating the availability of information, resources and services to meet the needs of domestic violence victims and their families.

Advocacy Organization Partnerships

Organizations such as Child Safe, the Rape Crisis Center, the Battered Women's Shelter and Parents of Murdered Children have worked in collaboration with the Department to provide investigative assistance as well as victim services to leverage with the Department's Victims Advocacy Office to ensure victims have access to all available services. Among the services offered are: individual and family counseling, emergency shelter assistance and guidance through the crime victim funds application process.

Social Media Outreach/PSAs

The Department has created and disseminated various outreach campaigns focusing on public safety issues such as human trafficking, domestic violence, sexual assault and burglary prevention in an effort to educate the public on general safety strategies, how to recognize indicators of criminal activity and also providing information on how to contact the Department to report criminal acts.

Participation in multi-agency Task Force Initiatives

The SAPD participates in a number of regional task force initiatives comprised of local, State and Federal law enforcement agencies which enhances the ability of the Department to obtain and share critical information related to criminal activity. Participation in these efforts also results in the availability of additional law enforcement personnel to assist in the identification and apprehension of criminals.

Development of Follow-Up Unit Information Sheet

The SAPD has developed a standardized form for use by crime victims that contains information to streamline the investigative process and provide contact information for the assigned follow-up unit as well as an information packet containing relevant forms in order to progress the investigative process.

Investigative Process

Duration

The duration of investigations varies based on the type of crime committed. Property crimes typically have the lowest solvability factors due to the fact that they are crimes of opportunity such as vehicle break-ins. In light of this fact, an investigation of this nature consists primarily of the collection of evidence at the scene and an examination of the investigative packet to determine the probability of solving the case which results in a short investigative process.

Violent crimes, which are commonly crimes of passion, or crimes where motive is easily established such as domestic violence, sexual assault and murder, require a more robust investigative approach which includes neighborhood canvassing, subpoenas of uncooperative witnesses and a thorough forensic analysis of evidence. This investigative process is more time consuming due to the fact that it involves crimes against persons.

Contact

Detectives assigned to investigate a crime are expected to provide their contact information to victims of crime and are responsible for maintaining contact with victims and witnesses as needed based on the status of the investigation. Contact with victims of property crime will typically consist of the officer conducting the initial investigation advising the individual to contact property crimes to provide additional information that may increase the solvability of the case.

Contacts with victims and witnesses to violent crime are established as soon as possible and are present throughout the duration of the investigation. This is necessary from a case handling perspective as well as a victim advocacy perspective to ensure adequate services are being provided and a victim/witness will have confidence in the Department's commitment to solve the case. Detectives assigned to the case will provide contact information to victims and witnesses and encourage them to call with any questions, concerns or information that will assist the investigation.

Updates

In every investigation, the Department is committed to contacting victims to provide updates on the status of their investigation. Victims are also encouraged to contact the handling detective whenever additional information is needed.

Supervisor Role

The primary role of the supervisor is to ensure that individual cases are being thoroughly investigated, all tangible leads are being followed up on, that progress is being made on all cases and verifying that regular communication is being made with victims and/or their families. Supervisors are also responsible for handling complaints from victims regarding the progress or disposition of their investigation.

Independent Review

Robert Stewart, President and CEO of Bobcat Training & Consulting, has been selected to serve as an outside advisor to complete an independent review of existing SOPs related to the Department's investigative process. Mr. Stewart has 28 years of law enforcement experience to include 22 years with the D.C. Metropolitan Police Department and five years as a Chief of Police in Florida.

The review will focus on ensuring that the Department has implemented policies and procedures to enhance its responsiveness to the community. Copies of SAPD policies and procedures have been provided to Mr. Stewart for review.

ISSUE:

The San Antonio Police Department investigates all reported crimes and allegations of potential criminal activity. The Department remains committed to continuously improving the investigative process by regularly reviewing policies and procedures and maintaining effective partnerships with community organizations, service providers and community stakeholders.

RECOMMENDATION:

This briefing is for informational purposes only.