

**FAIRFAX COUNTY, VIRGINIA
MEMORANDUM**

TO: Michael T. Cash, Executive Director **DATE:** February 1, 2006
Human Rights Commission

FROM: Colonel David M. Rohrer
Chief of Police

SUBJ: Police Department Bias Crime Annual Report

REF: Calendar Year 2005

The following is a summary of bias related events reported in Fairfax County during the 2005 calendar year. Bias events are categorized under two headings:

- 1) Bias Crime: An unlawful action committed against a person or their property because of his or her race, religious conviction, ethnic/national origin, disability, and/or sexual orientation. Bias crimes are subdivided into crimes against persons and crimes against property.

Bias crimes against persons reported in CY 2005 included: assault, disorderly conduct, and written, phone, or e-mail threats.

Bias crimes against property reported in CY 2005 included: destruction of property and graffiti.

- 2) Bias Incident: An event motivated by prejudice that does not violate criminal law. It is our policy to respond, document, and attempt to defuse bias motivated incidents as well as deter the participants from escalating their activity to a prosecutable offense.

There were one hundred and twenty-three bias events reported in Fairfax County in CY 2005. Of these, fifty-two were classified as bias incidents and seventy-one as bias crimes. This is a significant increase from the sixty-nine events (thirty incidents and 39 crimes) that were reported in CY 2004 and is a reversal of the downward pattern of the past three years.

Fifty (69.5%) of the bias crimes were classified as crimes against property such as graffiti and destruction of property cases and twenty-one (29.5%) were classified as crimes against persons. There were ten bias crimes against persons reported in 2004.

The bias crimes against persons reported in 2005 are classified as follows:

- Simple Assault (10)
- Disorderly Conduct (6)
- Written Threats (2)
- Phone Threats (1)
- Bomb Threats (1)
- Arson (1)

Although the data represents an increase in bias crime from 2004, the overall rate of bias crime remains low. Additionally, the department believes the increase reflects higher rates of reporting incidents rather than a real increase in incidents. Some factors that may explain the improved reporting include:

- In CY 2005, the Fairfax County Police Department conducted departmental wide bias incident training. The course was designed to educate officers on the fears and perception of victims of bias incidents and heighten the officers' awareness of bias crimes occurring in Fairfax County.
- Roll call training was conducted by the Bias Crime Coordinator throughout CY 2005 to further strengthen officers' knowledge of bias incidents.
- The Fairfax County Police Department also reached out to the gay, lesbian, and transgender communities to discuss the issue of those groups not wanting to report bias incidents or crimes. The Fairfax County Police Department addressed the false perception in these communities that officers would treat them with disdain when taking reports. The department assured these communities that such actions from our officers would not be tolerated and reiterated the need to report bias crimes to the department.

During last year's Human Rights Commission meeting, members recommended a change in the database regarding categories. The members asked the Fairfax County Police Department to add more sub-groups to better clarify religious affiliation. The Fairfax County Police Department determined that this was needed and added three new categories; Anti-Christian, Anti-Muslim, and Religious other. The three new sub-groups were added to the CY 2005 statistics.

The Fairfax County Police Department recognizes the potential harm caused by bias motivated events. We remain committed to thoroughly investigate bias crimes and to educate our officers in order to maintain the public trust and ensure peace of mind for the citizens of Fairfax County. The Fairfax County Police Department will continue to develop partnerships with its citizens to ensure that all individuals receive the same level of service regardless of race, religious conviction, ethnic/national origin, disability, or sexual orientation.

Michael T. Cash
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Should you have any questions regarding this report, please contact our Bias Crimes Investigations Coordinator, Second Lieutenant David R. Smith at (703) 246-2289.

DMR/drs
Attachment