

Response to Questions on the FY 2006 Advertised Budget Plan

Request By: Supervisor Hyland

Question: Where are the current staff resources associated with the Police Department's Gang Investigations Unit located and how are they deployed? Will the four new positions be targeted to cover specific "hotspots" in relation to gang activities?

Response: The Fairfax County Police Department's Gang Investigations Unit is centrally housed in the Police headquarters campus (Massey Building) in Fairfax City. The eight detectives assigned to the Gang Unit are responsible for investigating gang-related crimes, supporting Patrol and the Criminal Investigations Bureau with gang-related criminal investigations, gathering intelligence, and providing enforcement throughout the County. The detectives on the Gang Unit are not specifically assigned to one district station; rather, the Gang Unit deploys to specific locations on a daily basis as determined by the criminal intelligence it gathers. The Gang Unit relies on information from patrol officers, citizens, and other agencies to develop deployment strategies. This mode of direct input from those directly impacted by gang activities allows the Gang Unit to be responsive to suppression of gang activity in the County. As such, the Gang Unit is highly mobile and flexible in meeting the specific geographic needs of the County.

Each district station also has one police officer who serves in the capacity of Gang Coordinator. Officers in these positions are volunteers who gather gang intelligence for the Gang Unit in addition to their normal patrol-related duties. They are not formal members of the Gang Unit but are a valuable conduit of the intelligence system. These officers are allotted time to assist the Gang Unit in focusing their deployment methods into neighborhoods where proactive measures are needed.

The addition of the four detectives included in the FY 2006 Advertised Budget Plan will allow the Gang Unit to keep pace with the increased number of gang-related crimes experienced by the County. For instance, between calendar years 2000 and 2004, the number of gang-related crimes recorded by the Police Department has increased from 400 to 1,126 incidents. While much of this growth can be attributed to crimes such as graffiti or property destruction, there has also been a rising trend in more serious and violent gang-related crimes, such as robberies, burglaries, larcenies, assaults, malicious woundings, and weapons and illegal substance violations. The expanded Gang Unit will remain focused on its current responsibilities, as well as work in partnership with the FBI Washington Field Office and the Northern Virginia Regional Gang Task Force on gang-specific criminal intelligence analysis, along with the operation and support of the Northern Virginia Gang Intelligence Database System. This expansion will allow the Gang Investigations Unit to develop and further regional and national cases in a thorough and coordinated manner. A new area of responsibility will be the investigation of malicious woundings that are gang-related and currently assigned to the Criminal Investigations Bureau. Detectives in the Gang Unit often become the primary investigators of gang violence cases and the additional four detectives will allow the Gang Unit to work the cases from start to finish, enhancing the prosecution of offenders. Lastly, the addition of four detectives will allow the Police Department to deploy additional resources to identified gang activity "hot spots" for the purposes of suppression of gang-related crimes.