



*INTERDEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE
LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE BUREAU*

Memorandum

To: Ald. Robert G. Donovan
From: Michael Talarczyk, Legislative Fiscal Analyst
Date: August 20, 2009
Re: City of Peoria Nuisance Property Surveillance Vehicle

This brief is intended to provide information on the Nuisance Property Surveillance Vehicle utilized by the Peoria, Illinois Police Department (“PPD”). The vehicle, a refurbished Brink’s armored truck, has been dubbed the “Armadillo” by the PPD.

➤ **BACKGROUND**

While dining at a Peoria area Panera Bread approximately 6 years ago, members of the PPD’s Gang Unit were approached by a Brink’s Incorporated executive. Brink’s is a leading provider of armored car transportation, ATM servicing, currency and coin processing and other services to banks, retailers and other commercial and governmental agencies around the world. The Brink’s executive inquired as to whether the PPD would be interested in a retired Brink’s armored truck.

The PPD purchased the armored truck for a dollar with the idea of converting it into a Special Response Team (equivalent of Special Weapons and Tactics, or SWAT, team) vehicle. Unfortunately, it was discovered that the armored plating on the exterior of the truck was qualified to resist handgun rounds only. Because the vehicle would not protect against rifle fire, it was determined ill-equipped to serve as a Special Response Team vehicle. As a result, the armored truck was resigned to a corner of the police parking lot, where it sat for the next six years.

➤ **NUISANCE VEHICLE HISTORY**

In 2006, looking for a way to deter activity at the home of a known drug dealer, the PPD parked a retired squad car in front of the property. Within roughly 24 hours, the squad car windows had been smashed, the tires punctured, and the body severely dented. The presence of the vehicle, however, had the intended effect – the dealer left the neighborhood.

Shortly thereafter, it was determined to convert the Brink's armored truck, until then a languishing "12,000 pound eyesore," into the perfect nuisance vehicle. The PPD spent the next year and approximately \$10,000 in asset forfeiture fund monies on new equipment and repairs for the armored truck. Improvements included protective screens over the head and tail lights, a padlocked hood, a locked gas cap and foam-filled, flat-proof tires. Specialized infra-red surveillance cameras, with the ability to shoot clear video through bullet-proof glass, were installed. "Peoria Police Nuisance Property Surveillance Vehicle" decals were pasted on all four sides of the truck. The bulky, ugly, blatantly obvious yet virtually indestructible truck, now dubbed the "Armadillo," was ready for duty.

➤ **THE ARMADILLO**

Properties in Peoria can be found to be a chronic nuisance, thereby generating nuisance letters from the Chief of Police, if the address meets certain criteria. Addresses of properties that have received nuisance letters are available online for the benefit of all Peoria residents.

On July 11, 2008, the Armadillo parked in front of its first nuisance property, thereby serving as the ultimate "shame" vehicle. The Armadillo will remain in place at a nuisance property for anywhere from 3 to 7 days, and is then driven to the next problem spot by the department's designated Nuisance Abatement Officer. (This is a sworn police officer position created approximately two years ago.)

The Armadillo's goal is not to make arrests, but to function as a "we know what you are up to and you are being watched" indestructible placard equipped with video cameras. Over and above serving as a stigma to the offending nuisance property, it functions as a comfort to surrounding law abiding residents. In fact, residents can request, via e-mail, that the Armadillo be parked in front of a qualified nuisance property.

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