



Berkeley City Council District 4

July 29, 2015

Dee Williams-Ridley
Interim City Manager
City of Berkeley
2180 Milvia Street
Berkeley, CA 94704

RE: Area-wide Suspect Search by Berkeley Police on July 27, 2015

Dear Ms. Williams-Ridley:

I am writing to inquire about the armed robbery that occurred at 2450 Sacramento Street on Monday, July 27, 2015, and the subsequent area-wide search by the Berkeley Police Department and what appear to be other agencies, resulting in the closure of major streets, a door-to-door search, and the use of military-style uniforms, armaments and vehicles.

While the robbery took place in Council District 2, it was directly across the street from my district, and the following area-wide search resulted in the closure of streets and properties searched in District 4.

As the elected representative of Council District 4, I received numerous reports from constituents expressing concern over the nature and scale of the police response. While I very much appreciate the rapid response and determination by our Berkeley Police to apprehend a potentially dangerous suspect, this incident raises questions of whether the response was proportional to the crime, particularly considering the resources expended and the impacts on the surrounding community. I understand that this is not the first time BPD has responded to a pursuit of a suspect with officers dressed in military-type uniforms and with guns drawn in neighborhoods.

Additional questions have been raised given the concerns expressed by the Mayor and City Council over the last few years regarding the increasing "militarization" of local police departments, and the subsequent decision of the Council to not pursue the purchase of a Bearcat armored vehicle. Given expressed concerns over having a tank-like vehicle roaming the streets of Berkeley, the Department received funding for an armored van as an alternative. Did the City ultimately purchase an armored van? If yes, why was the van not used?

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In 2012, there was extensive conversation not only regarding the purchase of an armored vehicle but our participation in the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) which provides grants and training for local departments, including participation in the Urban Shield training. UASI grants have funded military-type equipment, such as armored vehicles and drones for other departments.

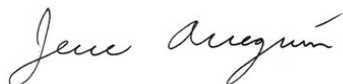
Provided Council's concerns over the purchase and use of an armored vehicle in the City of Berkeley, we adopted Resolution No. 65,901-N.S. in September 2012 to require review and approval of all grant applications for equipment, if the equipment is being provided to the Police Department through Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) funds. Our Chief told us that the Department would not be purchasing a Bearcat Armored vehicle, yet we have either allowed other departments to bring a Bearcat into Berkeley during mutual aid or it appears we have borrowed their armored vehicle. This is contrary to the express wishes of the Council.

To that end I have several questions:

- How many of our officers were involved in the response to the armed robbery? What is the estimated cost of the response?
- Which other agencies were involved in the response and what support was provided?
- Which agency provided the armored vehicle? Was the vehicle specifically requested? What are the situational thresholds that BPD considers appropriate for the usage of an armored vehicle?
- Given other recent armed robberies, and that no victims reported physical harm in this particular case, what aspects of this armed robbery triggered the scale of our response? Was there additional reason to believe the suspect to be an enhanced threat to public safety?
- What are the circumstances in which Special Response teams are used?

Your prompt response would be greatly appreciated given the questions and concerns I have received from my constituents over this incident.

Sincerely,



Jesse Arreguín
City Councilmember, District 4