

Memorandum



Agenda Item No. 2(B)4
September 1, 2015

Date: July 10, 2015

To: Honorable Chairman Jean Monestime
and Members, Board of County Commissioners

From: Carlos A. Gimenez
Mayor

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Carlos A. Gimenez", written over a horizontal line.

Subject: Miami-Dade Police Department's Information Clearinghouse and Early Warning System for Missing Persons – Directive 142197

The following information is provided as requested by Commissioner Rebeca Sosa during the October 7, 2014 Board of County Commissioners (Board) meeting, directing the Administration to provide a written report outlining the feasibility and cost of creating an information clearinghouse for missing persons and other related protocols utilized by the Miami-Dade Police Department (MDPD) in the investigation of missing person cases.

The MDPD's missing persons information is currently captured and stored by the Special Victims Bureau (SVB) Clearinghouse. The SVB Clearinghouse obtains information on all missing persons reported throughout the country through the Florida Crime Information Center (FCIC) and the National Crime Information Center (NCIC). The SVB Clearinghouse currently captures, consolidates, and prepares informational press releases for all of MDPD's missing persons cases.

In order to facilitate the receipt and distribution of missing person intelligence from municipal police departments, the SVB would require an additional four (4) Police Crime Analysis Specialists (PCAS) to perform these functions. The total cost per year for PCAS positions is approximately \$194,282. Each municipal police department would still be responsible for all analytical work for its missing persons case, including the issuance of appropriate alerts. The SVB Clearinghouse would serve as the repository and distribution center for flyers and information received by the respective municipal police department.

In addition, the purchase of a robo-call system would allow the SVB Clearinghouse to distribute missing persons information via telephone to residences and businesses within a selected radius of the missing persons incident or other determined location. The initial cost for a robo-call system is approximately \$100,000, with an annual cost of \$10,000 each year for service and maintenance. The SVB currently utilizes "The Communicator NXT Geocast Emergency Notification Solutions System" for reverse 9-1-1 (robo-calls) to notify citizens when a sexual predator or offender moves within a one (1) mile radius of their home. The SVB's current reverse 9-1-1 system can also be utilized to make notifications for missing persons; however, no more than one (1) message may be created at a time. The average time for a message to be distributed to residences within a one (1) mile radius is between six (6) and eight (8) hours. Additionally, if a reverse 9-1-1 call is in progress for a sexual predator or offender, the SVB would have to wait until the first call was completed before initiating a second call. Also, expanding the radius for the selected area to receive reverse 9-1-1 calls extends the time needed to complete the process; for example, a two (2) mile radius may take between 12 and 16 hours to complete.

The MDPD does not have a waiting period requirement prior to commencing a missing persons investigation; therefore, a waiver for commencing missing persons investigations does not need to be created by the MDPD.

The MDPD has identified a number of factors that local law enforcement can utilize to determine if a missing person is at risk for serious bodily harm. These factors, all of which are currently utilized by the MDPD, include, but are not limited to, if the person is able to care for himself, has a mental condition or is suicidal, and/or has demonstrated an extreme deviation from character or routine. Examples of extreme deviation of character or routine include, but are not limited to, a victim's vehicle found abandoned, victim's residence found ransacked, a victim does not show up or call after not arriving to work, the victim has a restraining order against another person who may be providing conflicting information regarding the victim, etc.

The MDPD suggests the creation of a new alert, the "Police Looking for Endangered Adult (PLEA) Alert". The criteria for activating a PLEA Alert for all law enforcement agencies would be determined when a missing person, 18 years of age or older, is unable to care for themselves, has a mental condition or is suicidal, and/or is the apparent victim of foul play (extreme deviation from character or routine), the victim's vehicle found abandoned, the victim's residence is discovered ransacked, or any factors determined to be one of concern. These factors are consistent with MDPD's Departmental Manual but additional factors may be added, if necessary.

Creating an alert specifically designed to notify the public of missing persons with any of the above conditions or circumstances requires changes in the Florida Legislature. In addition, the establishment of the PLEA Alert would require collaboration with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, Florida Chiefs and Sheriffs, Florida Department of Transportation, Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, Florida Highway Patrol, and Florida legislators to work in conjunction with concerned citizens and organizations. This collaboration would result in the initiation of an Executive Order which would have to be codified by the legislature into Florida Statute.

The MDPD currently utilizes several resources throughout Miami-Dade County and the State of Florida to disseminate information regarding missing persons and to advance missing persons investigations. These resources include:

- A Be-On-the-Look-Out (BOLO) is issued, via the police radio, countywide by police dispatchers.
- Within two (2) hours after a missing persons report is filed, information is promptly entered in the appropriate law enforcement computerized systems, such as the Florida Crime Information Center (FCIC) and National Crime Information Center (NCIC).
- Press releases and flyers are disseminated to all media outlets and local hospitals.
- An Amber Alert, Silver Alert, Missing Child Alert, Data Works Plus, LoJack/SafetyNet search operation, and/or the Child Abduction Response Team (CART) is implemented when the missing person meets the appropriate and applicable criteria.

Honorable Chairman Jean Monestime
And Members, Board of County Commissioners
Page 3

On Wednesday, April 1, 2015 the SVB Command Staff attended the Miami-Dade County Association of Chiefs of Police meeting. The SVB Command Staff provided a presentation and overview of missing person investigations, specifically involving missing endangered adults. A workgroup was created for the purpose of laying a foundation to establish a best practices protocol. The protocol established would be universal across all agencies and police departments within Miami-Dade County as it relates to endangered missing adults who do not have any mental or physical disabilities and are not entered into any other current alert systems.

On Friday, June 19, 2015 the SVB conducted the first roundtable meeting where representatives from the Village of Bal Harbour Police Department, Miami-Dade County Public Schools Police Department, City of North Miami Police Department, and the MDPD were present. The City North Miami Beach, City of Sunny Isles, and City of Surfside Police Departments were unable to attend. The meeting was convened to discuss the best practices of missing person investigations and the possibility of creating legislation that would assist in future investigations which would affect this specific group of individuals. Current investigative protocols were reviewed with all workgroup members and a consensus was reached on how to thoroughly investigate missing persons and the unique challenges that are presented with each case.

The creation of PLEA Alert, which would give missing endangered adults their own statewide alert notification system when it meets the criteria, such as suspected foul play or a suicidal person, was discussed. The workgroup voiced concern that creating a new alert for missing adults could possibly desensitize the public when traditional alerts for AMBER/SILVER are activated.

At the conclusion of the meeting, all workgroup members agreed to submit the missing person investigative protocols from their respective agencies. Upon review, additional meetings will be held to continue the collaboration among the various agencies to ensure that a uniform best practices policy is established and submitted to the Miami-Dade County Association of Chiefs of Police for implementation.

Per Ordinance 14-65, this memorandum will be placed on the next available Board of County Commissioners meeting agenda.

Should you require additional information, please contact Director J.D. Patterson, Jr., Miami-Dade Police Department, at (305) 471-3272, or me directly.

c: Robert A. Cuevas, Jr., County Attorney
Russell Benford, Deputy Mayor, Office of the Mayor
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