

Dear Editor – No, We Do Not Need a BearCat

 culvercitycrossroads.com/2020/03/05/dear-editor-no-we-do-not-need-a-bearcat

Dear Editor,

It might be hard for proponents of Culver City Police Department's purposed purchase of a Ballistic Engineered Armored Response Counter Attack Truck (BearCat) to acknowledge the obvious: BearCats—no matter how fearsome—do NOT prevent emergencies, but respond AFTER an emergency occurs. Webster's College Dictionary informs us that an "emergency" is "an unexpected occurrence requiring immediate attention." Some argue, "It only takes a split second for an incident to occur." But a BearCat cannot prevent the incident. In January 2019, at the Culver City Ramada Inn, shots were fired—the emergency—before a BearCat left its den. Unfortunately, whatever the emergency, there will be damage before a BearCat arrives.

My Public Records Act (PRA) request to Culver City related to CCPD's desire to purchase a BearCat as part of its newly-minted Emergency Response Team (ERT) program. ERT is code for SWAT. The response demonstrates:

- (1) The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (Sheriff) has provided SWAT services to CCPD on a total of eight emergencies since 1994, WITHOUT charge;
- (2) CCPD has not complained about the Sheriff's SWAT services;
- (3) CCPD has no document showing that less harm would have been incurred had the Sheriff's SWAT team arrived earlier at the scene.

By law, we already pay for the Sheriff's services with our Los Angeles County property taxes. Furthermore, please recall that the Sheriff's SWAT teams are on standby 24/7/365. Culver City's proposed-part-time SWAT team would have to get together and suit-up before going to the site of an emergency. Where is the proof that CCPD's part-timers would be faster than the Sheriff's full-time pros?

Most disconcerting is Culver City's resort to propaganda. Culver City responded to another PRA request concerning representations on Culver City's BearCat-Emergency-Rescue-Vehicle website. The relevant request and response are as follows:

A recent Culver City announcement states, in part: "After analyzing the City's emergency response capabilities, staff recently determined that acquiring a Lenco BearCat Rescue Vehicle would enhance public safety services in Culver City." Please provide me with a copy of all documents constituting Staff's analysis and determination.

City response: There are no records responsive to this request.

“No records”! For all we know, this crucial “analysis” and “determination” to waste \$500,000 was just a casual conversation between two unqualified staffers during a short coffee-and-donut break.

CCPD has NOT justified its request. CCPD has presented NO evidence that its needs a BearCat. And, \$500,000 would just be the opening costs to support a SWAT team. Yes, we support our police, but there are limits.

Les Greenberg, Esquire