


# Dear Editor – Culver City Does Not Need a SWAT Team

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Dear Editor,

Culver City has absolutely NO need for its own Ballistic Engineered Armored Response Counter Attack Truck (BearCat). By virtue of the property taxes we pay to Los Angeles County; the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (Sheriff) already provides us with emergency police protection—using its BearCats and SWAT teams. For more than 100 years, the Culver City Police Department (CCPD) has relied upon the Sheriff to provide emergency protection. Since 1973, Government Code, Section 51350, has barred the Sheriff from charging Culver City or any other city in Los Angeles County for emergency protection. (*City of Los Angeles v. City of Artesia* (1977) 73 Cal.App.3d.) CCPD wants to waste \$242,000 of our taxpayer funds and \$250,000 of asset-seizure funds purchasing a BearCat, so that CCPD can learn how to do what the Sheriff already does well. That expenditure would constitute another example of financial waste!

Because the City Council claims we have a shortage of funds and repeatedly sought tax increases, CCPD bears a heavy burden of proof to justify purchasing a BearCat. Using Public Records Act requests, we are making efforts to learn whether CCPD can meet that burden. We formally requested, among other things, that CCPD produce documents showing: (1) the very few times a BearCat was deployed in Culver City; (2) whether CCPD has ever claimed any dissatisfaction with the Sheriff's emergency services; and (3) whether CCPD ever suffered any injury when serving a high-risk warrant without using a BearCat.

CCPD claims that it needs a BearCat to serve high-risk warrants. However, the few times that might occur, CCPD would still need to step outside a BearCat to service the warrant. Please see video taken at the Culver City Ramada Inn showing a Sheriff's SWAT team using a hand-held shield for protection when approaching a doorway on foot—even though a BearCat was on the scene.

([www.newsflare.com/video/268227/crime-accidents/exclusive-footage-shows-moment-man-barricaded-at-culver-city-motel-is-removed-by-officers-after-shooting](http://www.newsflare.com/video/268227/crime-accidents/exclusive-footage-shows-moment-man-barricaded-at-culver-city-motel-is-removed-by-officers-after-shooting))

We have a win-win solution—keep the status quo—let the BearCat hibernate. Those on the right would still have the high-quality protection they desire. In the unlikely event of an emergency, one of the Sheriff's numerous BearCats and SWAT teams would race into Culver City—continuing to protect us at NO extra cost. Those on the left would not have to bear the sight of BearCats routinely clawing their way through our streets. The City Council could claim it exercised some fiscal responsibility and prudent oversight. CCPD could re-focus its time and resources on non-emergency policing.

However, CCPD is moving Culver City in the wrong direction by secretly developing full-SWAT capabilities through its euphemistically labeled “Emergency Response Team program.” The American Special Ops website informs us that “[t]he SWAT team of a given agency may be called the ... Emergency Response Team....” The small print in Culver City’s Annual Budget states, in part, “The Police Department requests ... an Emergency Response Team (ERT) program. ... General Fund ... [ERT] Vehicle – \$200,000; [ERT] special supplies – \$42,000 ... Asset Seizure Fund ... [ERT] Tactical Equipment – \$150,000; [ERT] Officer Safety Equipment – \$100,000.” The word “requests” indicates that, before the annual budgetary process, the City Council had NOT approved CCPD’s proposed “ERT program.”

We need to learn whether the City Council quietly approved CCPD’s proposed “ERT program” during the annual budget process—a classic “fait accompli.” My recent search of Culver City’s website for “ERT program” yields only the aforesaid budget entries and two statements, i.e., “the City developed and implemented an Emergency Response Team,” “[t]he Culver City Police Department will solicit input from the community and the City Council to develop a departmental operations policy of the BearCat.” Bear in mind that the words “developed” and “implemented” indicate that CCPD’s proposed “ERT program” is actually a done deal! However, CCPD and the City Council did not first “solicit [our] input.”

We, Culver City residents, should have a public discussion with the CCPD and the City Council as to whether we need or want an “ERT [SWAT] program.” Why should we pay extra to train and equipment CCPD to do what the Sheriff already does? We do not want to descend a slippery slope of unnecessary expenses and militarization of our police force. Remember, the CCPD has the burden of proof.

Please respectfully request our City Council members to vote “NO” on CCPD’s request for us to pay again for protection we already have.

Les Greenberg, Esquire