

Citing Profiling Worries, Chief Seeks Cameras in Police Cars

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Body

The Prince William County **police chief** said yesterday that the county should install video **cameras** in patrol **cars** to help protect officers from allegations of racial **profiling** as they enforce the county's crackdown on illegal immigration.

Chief Charlie T. Deane told the Board of County Supervisors during its regular weekly meeting that **cameras** would help paint a picture of "what really happened and what was really said" in the field. **Cameras** create visual evidence, shield officers from complaints and serve as training tools, he said.

"We want to protect officers and the county from unjustified allegations of discrimination and racial **profiling**," Deane said.

The **chief** said he is concerned that when Prince William's new immigration policy is put into place next month, the county will experience a surge in complaints from people stopped by officers. Under the new rules, **police** are required to check the immigration status of anyone suspected of breaking the law, no matter how minor the crime.

"This is to prevent lawsuits," he said.

Installing digital **cameras** would cost about \$6,000 for each patrol **car**, officials in other jurisdictions said. That does not include the costs of monitoring the footage. Prince William has more than 250 **cars**.

"If they install **cameras**, it is a good check for **police**, as long as all of the videos are available for the public to view," said Nancy Lyall, a coordinator with Mexicans Without Borders, an immigrant advocacy group. "We are going to see that the issue is not whether it's effective or constitutional, but whether taxpayers are willing to see taxes increase to pay for this."

Like other jurisdictions, Prince William is facing a budget shortfall in the coming year and will have to cut spending, slash services or raise taxes. Deane's request for **cameras** was not a formal budget request.

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The **chief** recently visited the New Jersey State **Police** department to assess its use of **cameras** in patrol **cars**. They have been in place since 2000, after a shooting in 1998 on the New Jersey Turnpike raised questions about racial **profiling**.

In response, the state **police** installed **cameras** in its patrol **cars** at a cost of \$137 million over eight years. Tapes are randomly reviewed and used as part of a risk-management system to protect civilians' rights and ensure that officers are following probable-cause procedures.

"It's the trooper's best friend," said Capt. Al Della Fave, a state **police** spokesman. "It's protected so many troopers when it came to suits being filed. The tale of the tape has been tremendous in clearing troopers of inappropriate behavior."

New Jersey's program has evolved. Initially, VHS tapes were locked in **car** trunks, and only supervisors had access to them. Troopers are now testing digital models that can instantly transmit video to a **police** station. Instead of storing tapes in a warehouse, digital displays can be kept on hard drives, Della Fave said.

Digital **cameras** cost \$6,000 each; analog **cameras**, \$3,700, he said.

Deane said yesterday that the University of Virginia, James Madison University and the **Police** Executive Research Forum will review the fairness of Prince William's policy after two years, a \$300,000 effort. Researchers have begun meeting with local groups, including immigrant-advocacy organizations.

At its meeting yesterday, the Prince William board delayed the transfer of almost \$800,000 from its contingency reserves to the **police** department to enforce portions of the illegal immigrant resolution passed last year.

The board postponed the vote because Supervisor John T. Stirrup (R-Gainesville), who introduced the resolution, was not at the meeting.

The contingency fund is money set aside each year for unexpected expenses. The estimated cost of implementing the crackdown in the current budget year is \$1.3 million.

Supervisors also received an update yesterday on the implementation of federal immigration laws at the county adult detention center. Prince William has detained almost 400 people since July. There have been some unexpected issues in implementing the new rules, leading to higher-than-anticipated costs because of increased staff overtime and jail crowding.

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