



March 7, 2000

Mr. Leonard W. Peck, Jr.  
Assistant General Counsel  
Texas Department of Criminal Justice  
P.O. Box 4004  
Huntsville, Texas 77342-4004

OR2000-0919

Dear Mr. Peck:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 133083.

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (the "department") received a request for video tapes of use of force incidents relating to a specified inmate. You have supplied the responsive information to this office for review. You claim that the requested information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.107, and 552.131 of the Government Code. As section 552.131 disposes of this request, we do not address the other exceptions to disclosure raised.

Section 552.131(a), relating to TDCJ inmates, provides:

Except as provided by Subsection (b) or by Section 552.029, information obtained or maintained by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice is excepted from the requirements of Section 552.021 if it is information about an inmate who is confined in a facility operated by or under a contract with the department.

The requested video tapes are information about an inmate who is confined in a facility operated by or under a contract with the department, and are not within the ambit of section 552.131(b) or 552.029 of the Government Code. Therefore these tapes must be withheld pursuant to Government Code section 552.131.

This letter ruling is limited to the particular records at issue in this request and limited to the facts as presented to us; therefore, this ruling must not be relied upon as a previous determination regarding any other records or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For example, governmental bodies are prohibited from asking the attorney general to reconsider this ruling. Gov't Code § 552.301(f). If the governmental body wants to challenge this ruling, the governmental body must appeal by filing suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such an appeal, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.353(b)(3), (c). If the governmental body does not appeal this ruling and the governmental body does not comply with it, then both the requestor and the attorney general have the right to file suit against the governmental body to enforce this ruling. *Id.* § 552.321(a).

If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, within 10 calendar days of this ruling, the governmental body will do one of the following three things: 1) release the public records; 2) notify the requestor of the exact day, time, and place that copies of the records will be provided or that the records can be inspected; or 3) notify the requestor of the governmental body's intent to challenge this letter ruling in court. If the governmental body fails to do one of these three things within 10 calendar days of this ruling, then the requestor should report that failure to the attorney general's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at 877/673-6839. The requestor may also file a complaint with the district or county attorney. *Id.* § 552.3215(e).

If this ruling requires or permits the governmental body to withhold all or some of the requested information, the requestor can appeal that decision by suing the governmental body. *Id.* § 552.321(a); *Texas Department of Public Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408, 411 (Tex. App.–Austin 1992, no writ).

If the governmental body, the requestor, or any other person has questions or comments about this ruling, they may contact our office. Although there is no statutory deadline for contacting us, the attorney general prefers to receive any comments within 10 calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,



Michael Jay Burns  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

MJB/nc

Ref: ID# 133083

Encl Submitted documents

cc: Mr. Dwight Rawlinson  
Texas Prison Labor Union  
2121 South 4<sup>th</sup> Street  
Waco, Texas 76706  
(w/o enclosures)