



OFFICE of the ATTORNEY GENERAL
GREG ABBOTT

May 8, 2003

Mr. Thomas H. Arnold
City Attorney
City of Texarkana
P. O. Box 1967
Texarkana, Texas 75504

OR2003-3119

Dear Mr. Arnold:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 180800.

The Texarkana Police Department (the "department") received a request for copies of "patrol shift ride assignments for each and every day beginning Jan. 1, 2003 and through February 13, 2003." The requestor also seeks copies of "police beat maps" from the same time frame. You state that you have provided the requestor with the requested beat maps. You claim, however, that the remaining requested information is excepted from disclosure pursuant to section 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and have reviewed the submitted representative sample documents.¹

Section 552.108(b) excepts from disclosure "[a]n internal record or notation of a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that is maintained for internal use in matters relating to law enforcement or prosecution . . . if: (1) release of the internal record or notation would interfere with law enforcement or prosecution[.]" Gov't Code § 552.108(b)(1). Section 552.108(b)(1) is intended to protect "information which, if released, would permit private citizens to anticipate weaknesses in a police department, avoid detection, jeopardize officer safety, and generally undermine police efforts to effectuate the laws of this State." *City of Ft. Worth v. Cornyn*, 86 S.W.3d 320 (Tex. App.—Austin 2002, no writ). This office has stated that under the statutory predecessor to section 552.108(b), a governmental body may

¹ We assume that the representative sample of records submitted to this office is truly representative of the requested records as a whole. See Open Records Decision Nos. 499 (1988), 497 (1988). This open records letter does not reach and, therefore, does not authorize the withholding of any other requested records to the extent that those records contain substantially different types of information than that submitted to this office.

withhold information that would reveal law enforcement techniques. *See, e.g.*, Open Records Decision Nos. 531 (1989) (release of detailed use of force guidelines would unduly interfere with law enforcement), 456 (1987) (release of forms containing information regarding location of off-duty police officers in advance would unduly interfere with law enforcement), 413 (1984) (release of sketch showing security measures to be used at next execution would unduly interfere with law enforcement), 409 (1984) (if information regarding certain burglaries exhibits pattern that reveals investigative techniques, information is excepted under section 552.108), 341 (1982) (release of certain information from Department of Public Safety would unduly interfere with law enforcement because release would hamper departmental efforts to detect forgeries of drivers' licenses), 252 (1980) (section 552.108 is designed to protect investigative techniques and procedures used in law enforcement), 143 (1976) (disclosure of specific operations or specialized equipment directly related to investigation or detection of crime may be excepted).

However, in order for a governmental body to claim this exception to disclosure, it must meet its burden of explaining, if the requested information does not supply the explanation on its face, how and why release of the requested information would interfere with law enforcement and crime prevention. *See* Open Records Decision No. 562 at 10 (1990). Furthermore, generally known policies and techniques may not be withheld under section 552.108. *See, e.g.*, Open Records Decision Nos. 531 at 2-3 (1989) (Penal Code provisions, common law rules, and constitutional limitations on use of force are not protected under section 552.108), 252 at 3 (1980) (governmental body did not meet burden because it did not indicate why investigative procedures and techniques requested were different from those commonly known). Whether disclosure of particular records will interfere with law enforcement or prosecution must be decided on a case-by-case basis. *See* Attorney General Opinion MW-381 (1981).

You state that the submitted shift riding schedules are prepared to identify which police officer is on duty on a specified "geographically defined" beat or patrol area. You also state the schedules show the duty times for each officer which indicate the times that the officers go to and from the field. Further, you state that the release of the schedules

could be used to determine, predict, and to exploit weaknesses in the screen of protection provided by the police department; to determine which areas of the city are vulnerable to criminal activity based on a known absence of patrol officers in a given area, their staffing numbers, shift field entry and departure times, and meal breaks; to plan optimum opportunities for the successful commission of criminal activity and escape routes; to determine how best to time criminal activity so as to avoid confrontation with police officers and to evade capture and arrest; and how best to impair the police department's ability to protect the city through its plan of police officer deployment.

As we understand that the department has released the requested “police beat maps,” we find, based on our review of your arguments and the submitted information, that the department has adequately demonstrated that the release of the submitted information would interfere with law enforcement or crime prevention. *See* Gov’t Code § 552.108(b)(1); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 508 at 4 (1988) (governmental body must demonstrate how release of particular information at issue would interfere with law enforcement efforts unless information does so on its face). Accordingly, we conclude that the department may withhold the submitted information in its entirety pursuant to section 552.108(b)(1) of the Government Code.

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).

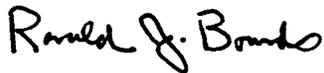
If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, within 10 calendar days of this ruling, the governmental body will do one of the following 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 Dep’t of Pub. Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408, 411 (Tex. App.—Austin 1992, no writ).

Please remember that under the Act the release of information triggers certain procedures for costs and charges to the requestor. If records are released in compliance with this ruling, be sure that all charges for the information are at or below the legal amounts. Questions or complaints about over-charging must be directed to Hadassah Schloss at the Texas Building and Procurement Commission at (512) 475-2497.

If the governmental body, the requestor, or any other person has questions or comments about this ruling, they may contact our office. We note that a third party may challenge this ruling by filing suit seeking to withhold information from a requestor. Gov't Code § 552.325. 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,



Ronald J. Bounds
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

RJB/lmt

Ref: ID# 180800

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Ms. Lisa Bose McDermott
Reporter
Texarkana Gazette
P.O. Box 621
Texarkana, Texas 75504
(w/o enclosures)