



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

September 8, 2008

Ms. Pamela Smith
Assistant General Counsel
Texas Department of Public Safety
P. O. Box 4087
Austin, Texas 78773-0001

OR2008-12302

Dear Ms. Smith:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under the Public Information Act (the "Act"), chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 322463.

The Texas Department of Public Safety (the "department") received a request for (1) information pertaining to the present commander of the Texas Rangers, (2) "the number of staff and budget of the governor's protective detail [the "GPD"] for all years since 2000," and (3) personnel information related to the GPD commanders. You state that information responsive to items one and three of the request have been provided to the requestor. You explain that the department does not maintain a separate budget for the GPD, and therefore the department has no information responsive to that portion of the request.¹ You claim that the information regarding GPD staffing is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 and 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.108(b) of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "[a]n internal record or notation of a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that is maintained for internal use in

¹We note that a governmental body is not required to obtain information not in its possession. Open Records Decision No. 558 (1990). Further, the Act does not require a governmental body to disclose information that did not exist at the time the request was received. *Econ. Opportunities Dev. Corp. v. Bustamante*, 562 S.W.2d 266 (Tex. Civ. App.—San Antonio 1978, writ dismissed); Open Records Decision No. 452 at 3 (1986).

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 pet.). This office has stated that under the statutory predecessor to section 552.108(b), a governmental body may 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) (predecessor to 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 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 assert that the release of information that would reveal the number of law enforcement personnel assigned to the GPD would “fundamentally compromise procedures utilized to ensure the governor’s safety.” You further state that release of this information “could substantially interfere with the efforts of the GPD to prevent the commission of crimes directed at the governor or the governor’s family.” After carefully reviewing your arguments and the submitted information, we agree that the department has adequately demonstrated that release the submitted information would interfere with law enforcement or crime prevention. *Cf.* Open Records Decision No. 508 (1988) (noting legitimate security concern in releasing dates specific prisoners will be transferred to the Department of

Corrections prior to the transfer). Therefore, the department may withhold the submitted information under section 552.108(b)(1) of the Government Code.²

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 file suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such a challenge, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.353(b)(3). If the governmental body does not file suit over 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, upon receiving this ruling, the governmental body will either release the public records promptly pursuant to section 552.221(a) of the Government Code or file a lawsuit challenging this ruling pursuant to section 552.324 of the Government Code. If the governmental body fails to do one of these things, 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 challenge 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).

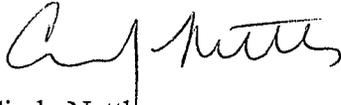
Please remember that under the Act the release of information triggers certain procedures for costs and charges to the requestor. If records are released in compliance with this ruling, be sure that all charges for the information are at or below the legal amounts. Questions or complaints about over-charging must be directed to Hadassah Schloss at the Office of the Attorney General 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. Although there is no statutory deadline for

²As our ruling is dispositive, we do not address your remaining arguments.

contacting us, the attorney general prefers to receive any comments within 10 calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cindy Nettles". The signature is written in a cursive style with a vertical line extending downwards from the end of the name.

Cindy Nettles
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CN/mcf

Ref: ID# 322463

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Mr. Lucius Lomax
P.O. Box 547
Austin, Texas 78767
(w/o enclosures)