



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

May 18, 2012

Ms. Leticia Mendiola
Crime Records Office
City of McAllen Police Department
P.O. Box 220
McAllen, Texas 78505-0220

OR2012-07497

Dear Ms. Mendiola:

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# 454060.

The McAllen Police Department (the "department") received a request for all police and incident reports involving three named individuals. You claim that the submitted information 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 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." Gov't Code § 552.101. This section encompasses the doctrine of common-law privacy, which protects information if it (1) contains highly intimate or embarrassing facts, the publication of which would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person, and (2) is not of legitimate concern to the public. *Indus. Found. v. Tex. Indus. Accident Bd.*, 540 S.W.2d 668, 685 (Tex. 1976). This office has found that a compilation of an individual's criminal history is highly embarrassing information, the publication of which would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person. *Cf. U.S. Dep't of Justice v. Reporters Comm. for Freedom of the Press*, 489 U.S. 749, 764 (1989) (finding significant privacy interest in compilation of individual's criminal history by recognizing distinction between public records found in courthouse files and local police stations and compiled summary of criminal history information). Moreover, we find that a compilation of a private citizen's criminal history is generally not of legitimate concern to the public. We note records relating to routine traffic

violations are not considered criminal history record information. *Cf.* Gov't Code § 411.082(2)(B) (criminal history record information does not include driving record information).

The requestor seeks all records relating to three individuals named in the request. This request requires the department to compile unspecified law enforcement records concerning the named individuals, thereby implicating these individuals' right to privacy. Accordingly, to the extent the department maintains law enforcement records depicting any of the named individuals as a suspect, arrestee, or criminal defendant, the department must withhold such information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. You have submitted information about these individuals that does not depict them as suspects, arrestees, or criminal defendants. This information is not part of a compilation of the named individuals' criminal history and the department may not withhold this information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy.

We understand you to raise section 552.108(b)(1) of the Government Code, which excepts from disclosure the internal records and notations of law enforcement agencies and prosecutors when their release would interfere with law enforcement and crime prevention. Gov't Code § 552.108(b)(1); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 531 at 2 (1989) (quoting *Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977)). 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." *See City of Fort Worth v. Cornyn*, 86 S.W.3d 320 at 327 (Tex. App.—Austin 2002, no writ). To demonstrate the applicability of this exception, a governmental body must meet its burden of explaining how and why release of the requested information would interfere with law enforcement and crime prevention. Open Records Decision No. 562 at 10 (1990). This office has concluded that section 552.108(b) excepts from public disclosure information relating to the security or operation of a law enforcement agency. *See, e.g.*, Open Records Decision Nos. 531 (release of detailed use of force guidelines would unduly interfere with law enforcement), 252 (1980) (section 552.108 of the Government Code 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). Section 552.108(b)(1) is not applicable, however, to generally known policies and procedures. *See, e.g.*, Open Records Decision Nos. 531 at 2–3 (Penal Code provisions, common law rules, and constitutional limitations on use of force not protected), 252 at 3 (governmental body failed to indicate why investigative procedures and techniques requested were any different from those commonly known).

You generally state the information at issue consists of internal records or notations of a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that are maintained for internal use in matters related to law enforcement or prosecution. Upon review, we find the department has not demonstrated how the release of the information at issue would interfere with law enforcement or crime

prevention. Thus, the department may not withhold the information at issue under section 552.108(b)(1) of the Government Code.

We note a portion of the information at issue is subject to section 552.130 of the Government Code.¹ Section 552.130 provides information relating to a motor vehicle operator's license, driver's license, motor vehicle title, or registration issued by an agency of this state, another state, or country is excepted from public release. Gov't Code § 552.130(a)(1), (2). Accordingly, the department must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.130 of the Government Code.

In summary, to the extent the department maintains law enforcement records depicting any of the named individuals as a suspect, arrestee, or criminal defendant, the department must withhold such information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. The department must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.130 of the Government Code and must release the remaining information.²

This letter ruling is limited to the particular information 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 information or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For more information concerning those rights and responsibilities, please visit our website at http://www.oag.state.tx.us/open/index_orl.php, or call the Office of the Attorney General's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. Questions concerning the allowable charges for providing public information under the Act must be directed to the Cost Rules Administrator of the Office of the Attorney General, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,



Nneka Kanu
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

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¹The Office of the Attorney General will raise a mandatory exception on behalf of a governmental body, but ordinarily will not raise other exceptions. Open Records Decision Nos. 481 (1987), 480 (1987), 470 (1987).

²We note the information being released contains social security numbers. Section 552.147(b) of the Government Code authorizes a governmental body to redact a living person's social security number from public release without the necessity of requesting a decision from this office. See Gov't Code § 552.147(b).

Ref: ID# 454060

Enc. Submitted documents

cc: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)