

Oakland Police Department Release Preliminary Report On Traffic Stop Statistics

Release Date May 11, 2001

Oakland, CA (May 11, 2001) In December 1999, Chief Richard Word announced that the Department would voluntarily collect traffic stop data. The decision to collect the data stemmed from mounting criticism of police departments nationwide, accused of practicing racial profiling. After a 90-day “pilot period” (March – May 2000), during which officers were trained and equipment/forms purchased, Oakland officers have recorded data for a total of 21,338 traffic stops during a 9 month period.

Based on the recommendations of a DWB Task Force, which convened in March 2000, the following information was collected about drivers and vehicle stops: **race, age, gender, location of stop, purpose of stop, disposition of stop, search conducted, evidence found, and probation/parole.**

A Police, Civil Rights, and Community Relations committee was also organized to analyze the data, address issues involving racial profiling, and serve as an advisory body to the Chief of Police. Members of this committee include representatives from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Urban Strategies Council, RAND Corporation-Graduate School, and the Oakland Police Department.

The committee conducted a review of the preliminary vehicle stop statistics at a meeting held on May 1, 2001. Of the 21,338 vehicles

stopped citywide, 10,210 (48%) were African American, 3,729 (17%) were Hispanic, 3,386 (16%) were White, 1,942 (10%) were Asian, and 2,071 (9%) were classified as other. According to the U.S. Census, African Americans in Oakland comprised 44% of the total population in 1990 and 36% in 2000. Hispanics comprised 14% in 1990 to 22% in 2000, Whites were 33% in 1990 to 23% in 2000, Asians were 14% in 1990 to 15% in 2000, and Others were 9% in 1990 to 9% in 2000.

In order to identify racial profiling, law enforcement agencies compare the proportion of stops made in each racial group with some other credible baseline or benchmark. For example, police may compare the proportion of people of color stopped in an area to the proportion of people of color living in that area. It was the consensus of the committee that citywide data from the 1990 and 2000 reports from the Bureau of the Census cannot serve as the sole comparison data, because Census data does not reflect important variables, such as tourist population, commercial activity (employees and patrons,) etc. However, population/ethnicity data from smaller Census tracts may suggest obvious disparities or provide direction relative to further research.

Oakland Police Captain Ronald Davis, traffic stop statistics coordinator and chair of the committee, stated "At this preliminary stage of data collection and analysis, the statistics do not point to whether or not the Department is engaged in racial profiling. What it does show is that additional research and analysis is necessary to determine if a problem exists."

Over 10 recommendations were submitted to the Chief of Police adding additional fields of information to the data form. Although there was some concern over search data (Out of 2,229 cars searched, 65% African American, 20% Hispanic, and 7% White) the group agreed that additional data collection and analysis is needed before a definitive conclusion can be reached. Captain Davis purports that "We are currently collecting more data than most agencies and after the recommendations are approved, we will have one of the most comprehensive traffic stop data collection systems in the state." A follow-up report to the City Council is scheduled for September 2001.

#####