

SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT  
Adam Christianson, Sheriff-Coroner

Reviewed  
Judge Begen  
7-3-14



ADMINISTRATION  
DIVISION

June 25, 2014

The Honorable Loretta Murphy Begen, Presiding Judge  
Stanislaus County Superior Court  
P.O. Box 3488  
Modesto, CA 95353

Re: Response to Civil Grand Jury Report #14-04C

Dear Judge Begen;

The Sheriff's Office is in receipt of the Stanislaus County Civil Grand Jury's (SCCGJ) completed "Case # 14-04C Policy and Compliance Report on the Stanislaus County Sheriff's Department Helicopter" report dated June 23, 2014.

Pursuant to Penal Code Sections 933(c) and 933.05 (f), the following is our response as it pertains to the Sheriff's Office use of aircraft:

The Civil Grand Jury included narrative sections in the report that reaffirms our commitment to protecting and serving the community pursuant to our Mission Statement which reads:

*We, the members of the Stanislaus County Sheriff's Department are dedicated to serve and protect the community through the highest standards of professionalism and ethical conduct by ENFORCEMENT, PREVENTION and EDUCATION in partnership with the community.*

The report also reaffirms that the Sheriff's Office "is committed to a number of community-supported activities that create a variety of positive benefits for the law enforcement community. These include such activities as the support of programs helping at-risk youth and charitable organizations that provide a positive impression of the Sheriff's Department and law enforcement within Stanislaus County."

Finally, and most importantly, this report states: "As an outgrowth of this SCCGJ investigation, it appears that there is no illegal or unlawful activity, or intent to misuse public funds, by the Sheriff's Department in the use of County vehicles for non-law enforcement activities."



**FINDINGS:**

- F1. The SCCGJ finds that there have been numerous activities over several years, occurring repeatedly, regarding the use of Sheriff Department vehicles, particularly helicopters, for non-law enforcement activities.

Response: The respondent disagrees with the finding. Our work throughout the community, *everything* we do, is a law enforcement activity as defined in our Mission Statement. There is nothing in policy, practice, procedure, written or otherwise, including any type of service we provide, that could specifically be defined as a “non-law enforcement activity.”

- F2. The SCCGJ finds that there is no written policy or approved procedure within the County or the Sheriff’s Department directly supporting the use of County-owned vehicles for any activity other than specific law enforcement actions.

Response: The respondent disagrees with the finding.

The Sheriff’s Office does have a policy that directs the use of our resources for “official business.” Our work throughout the community, *everything* we do, is official business as defined in our Mission Statement.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- R1. The SCCGJ recommends that the Sheriff, in consultation with the County Chief Executive Officer (CEO), establish a specific written policy defining the use of Sheriff Department resources, such as helicopters, for “non-law enforcement” activities.

Response: The respondent disagrees with the recommendation.

Additional policies and/or procedures supporting our work in the community are unnecessary. We are currently operating lawfully, legally and in compliance with all Federal Aviation Regulations. *This report specifically states: “there is no illegal or unlawful activity or intent to misuse public funds, by the Sheriff’s Department.”*

- R2. The SCCGJ recommends the policy allowing the use of the Sheriff’s Department helicopter for non-law enforcement activities must include written approval that requires the concurrence of two senior members within the Sheriff’s Department, or one member of the Sheriff’s Department and the CEO’s office. Such approval should be processed in advance of the non-law enforcement activity.

Response: The respondent disagrees with the recommendation.

Additional policies and/or procedures supporting our work in the community are unnecessary. There is no reason to obtain authorization from anyone other than the Sheriff, who is elected by and directly accountable to the people.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Christianson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

ADAM CHRISTIANSON  
Sheriff-Coroner  
Stanislaus County

cc: Supervisor Jim DeMartini, Chairman  
Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors

Judy Navarro, Foreperson Pro Tempore  
Stanislaus County Civil Grand Jury 2013-2014

Stan Risen, Chief Executive Officer  
Stanislaus County