

Timothy Clark

From: Timothy Clark
Sent: Thursday, November 21, 2013 10:30 AM
To: Timothy Clark
Subject: FW: Arming VPSOs

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From: Robert Claus <robclaus@me.com>
Date: Tue, Sep 17, 2013 at 5:27 PM
Subject: Arming VPSOs
To: Jonathan Kreiss-tomkins <jonathan.s.kt@gmail.com>

I have strong reservations about this bill and proposal based on my Trooper career and 18 years of being a VPSO oversight trooper.

1. VPSOs are not subject to the same type of background investigations or selective interviews that other law enforcement officers are. Frankly, most of the VPSOs I worked with were not hireable as police officers in the State of Alaska-intelligence, literacy, physical condition, education, background problems are the issues. These flaws(350 pound man who cannot get in and out of a car quickly or wear a gun belt) are overlooked for other qualities they bring to the job. The arming of VPSOs will not make them more highly qualified or give them better judgement. They were hired with the understanding that they were not to have full police powers, and the quality of person hired is not up to snuff. Highly selectively recruited troopers have had serious criminal problems in the villages as they dealt with being the lone man with a badge and a gun-we want to put folks out there with weaker backgrounds and qualifications?
2. The three headed management structure of the VPSO program means that each VPSO has three bosses-the State Trooper overseeing his law enforcement duties, the City or tribal entity setting his work schedule and providing day to day input, and the Native Corporation signing his checks. A smart VPSO figures out quickly how to play one off the other, and essentially is responsible to no one. This is not a good situation to put an armed individual in. Who would set the rules for armed action: the experts at DPS? the risk managers for the city or tribe? The out of touch Native Corporation bosses? The bill does not address that.
3. The VPSO program is trying to do law enforcement on the cheap in the villages, providing a level of service that would be unacceptable anywhere else in Alaska by people who are unqualified to work anywhere else in Alaska. Arming them adds to the discrimination problem of disparate services by race and region; it does not resolve that problem. If people want professional level police services in rural AK, hire more Troopers. If not, we end up with a race to the bottom-creating a sub-class of police officers for the villages alone.
4. The arming of VPSOs will turn every conflict they are in to an armed one. Every fight becomes a gunfight because they brought the gun. I believe that will increase the numbers of shootings in the villages, not decrease them.

Contact PSEA in Anchorage for more details if interested.