

MEMORANDUM

TO: Deputy Chief C.A. Banda

FROM: Major A.M. Keeney & Lieutenant V.H. Hobbs

DATE: August 3, 2005

RE: A Retrospective of the Sworn Attrition Rate as of July 1, 2005

The Atlanta Police Department currently has a Total Authorized Strength of 1,761 sworn police officers. As of July 1, 2005, the Atlanta Police Department had 1,639 sworn police officers filled, leaving 122 sworn positions vacant. Of these, 1,761 positions 1,100 are for basic police officers with the remaining 661 police department positions used for senior police officers (104), investigators (265), and supervisors (292), up to and including the Chief of Police.

- 1,761 = authorized sworn positions
- 1,639 = filled sworn positions
- 122 = vacant sworn positions

From February 2000, through July 8, 2005, the Background / Recruitment Unit have hired 821 police officers. During this same time period the department has lost 756 officers through attrition.

YEAR	NUMER HIRED	NUMBER LOST	RESIGNATION %	RESIGNATION
2000	133	212	100.9%	146
2001	123	107	40.6%	50
2002	153	149	69.2%	106
2003	161	112	41.%	67
2004	190	116	35.7%	68
2005	61	60		35
TOTAL	821	756		472

[Notes: to understanding this chart. The number lost column totals up all sworn officers who have left the department. The Resignation percentage represents the percentage of those officers who left for reason other than for normal retirement, disability or death. The Resignations column shows the number of officers leaving for non-retirement reasons]

- The APD has hired the equivalent of 49.9% (821 of 1,639 police officers) of its total authorized strength in the last 5.5 years. Total authorized strength includes all supervisory positions.
- The APD has hired the equivalent of 74.6% (821 of 1,100) of its total authorized strength of basic police officer positions in the last 5.5 years.

These numbers illustrate that the APD's Recruitment Unit has been able to attract and hire qualified people, even though the hiring standards have been raised in the areas of physical fitness, integrity, and reading comprehension. This has been done to ensure only the best and brightest are hired. However, retaining these qualified officers is another matter; a matter that is outside the scope and control of the Recruitment Unit.

The following excerpts were taken from a National Institute of Justice report dated July 2004 and title "Hiring and Keeping Police Officers"

- "Retaining new hires is a concern, because they account for many of the officers who leave police agencies each year." (page 1)
- "Retaining new hires seems to have been a significant part of the problem" (page 4)
- "Continued growth in hiring may not be suitable at recent rates." (page 1)
- "Some agencies may feel pressure to lower standards." (page 6)
- "Many police... managers will need to...find ways to make working in their agency more attractive." (page 5)

Nationally the number of qualified police officer applicants has been on the decline. Agencies all over the country are finding it difficult to fill and retain their police officer ranks. In the Atlanta Police Department along, it takes 100 applications in order to hire 6 police officer recruits. Putting this into context, in order to hire 821 police officers the Recruitment Unit has processed over 13,600 applications in the last 5.5 years. Furthermore, once these officers are hired and trained they only stay with APD a few years, and some leave law enforcement altogether.

- 100 employment applications yield approximately 6-8 Police officer recruits for Basic Mandate training.
- Each recruit training class of 34 students requires 400-500 applicants.

It must be taken into consideration that the APD is in competition with 1.)other metro Atlanta area law enforcement agencies, 2.)other major U.S. cities, and 3.)federal law enforcement agencies. This competition for recruits results in a draining of the talent pool from which to select APD's applicants and greater competition among law enforcement agencies recruiting from the same talent pools (i.e. colleges, military bases, job fairs, economically depressed areas of the country, etc.). Approximately 42% of APD recruits come from out of state. At the time these officers are recruited, they are not aware of the other metro area law enforcement agencies and what they offer in terms of salary, benefits, equipment, workload, work conditions, and commute. Once they come to Atlanta and are trained, they stay for a short time and then move on to other agencies, many within the metro area, where they are compensated at an equal to or greater amount and only have a portion of the workload and commute.

Lt. Hudson-Baker stated at an Administrative COBRA meeting that officers leave for the following reasons:

1. Pay
2. Benefits
3. Other Employment

In view of the fact that approximately 42%of APD recruits come from outside the state of Georgia, the Recruitment Unit reviewed the historical data for four years (2000-2003) to assess the impact on the APD's attrition rate by police officers hired from other states. It is remarkable to discover that the attrition rate of a particular part of the country was comparable to our hiring rate. The

decision to resign from the APD is a nationwide phenomenon and cannot be explained by geography (i.e. homesickness).

- Please refer to the attached table titled "Percent of Police Officers Hired and Resigned." It is broken down by region.

Some newly hired officers have indicated that they leave or are considering leaving because they have been on the APD for several years and they are still on the same "step" they received when they were hired. While it is true that modest "across the board" pay raises have been given over the last several years, the pay "steps" have been frozen, giving officers the perception that there is no real hope of ever reaching the top salary for their pay grade.

- The pay disparity between officers hired under the APD's new lateral entry program and those hired traditionally is having a significant negative effect on morale.

A common misconception is that it is easier and more cost efficient to continue hiring at the current rate, in order to keep up with attrition, instead of investing in the veteran police officers that have already been hired and trained.

As the recruitment talent pool continues to be depleted replacing trained professional police officers with raw recruits, who need extensive as well as expensive training, will become more and more difficult. Furthermore, young inexperienced police officers traditionally constitute more of a liability on the City of Atlanta because they are more likely to be involved in at-fault traffic accidents and/or civil law suits.

Hidden Cost of a High Attrition Rate / Inexperienced Personnel

- **The cost of training new officers is expensive and time-consuming**
- **The majority of traffic accidents are committed by inexperienced officers**
- **The majority of "use-of-force" complaints come from inexperienced officers.**
- **The high cost of salaries, fringe benefits, and operating costs to maintain a large recruitment unit over the years. Just salaries and fringe benefits has been estimated at \$1.6 million per year.**
- **The quality of the future talent pools for supervisors, managers, and leaders is negatively impacted. A lack of talented supervisory personnel will have a negative effect on non-supervisory officers and contribute to a higher attrition rate.**
- **The quality of preliminary investigations and follow-up investigations is directly related to the experience of the officer or investigator.**

In order to attract and hire the qualified police applicants under the current circumstances, the APD must fund and maintain a fully staffed Background / Recruitment Unit consisting of 25 full-time sworn police officers. This unit costs the police budget not only in officer and civilian salary, but in benefits and operation expenditures (recruitment trips, advertising, etc.) as well. These are 25 "badges and guns" that patrol the halls of City hall East and travel outside the City to recruit more police officers. Some of those 25 could be deployed in the community, if the APD had a low attrition rate.

In the time of ever increasing demands upon law enforcement, it is imperative that proactive steps be taken now to reduce the rate of attrition through resignations. Also, the APD should have the appropriate salary and benefit package that will make it stand out from other agencies making this the department that all professional police officers want to be part of the ADP. City Hall must approve a salary and benefits package that differentiates the APD from all other law enforcement

agencies in the metro area. When the compensation difference is in terms of a few hundred dollars, there is no difference.

- Current research documents, professional literature, case studies, surveys, and exit interviews have identified a multitude of reasons why a police officer may resign. However, all the negative reasons lead back to Pay, Benefits, and Work Conditions (i.e. people and things).
- The compensation package is an important consideration for most employees. Any explanation of an organization's attrition rate starts with the compensation package.

A police department will distinguish itself from other police departments by putting into practice the vision that the organization "values its employees." Good pay, good benefits, good supervisors/commanders, and good equipment will convey the message, not political or feel good rhetoric from our leaders.

"It is important" for the Mayor, all members of City Council, and "the community to recognize that the cost of hiring and retaining good police officers is less than the costs related to officer turnover." (page 298 of a Best Practices Guide titled "Recruitment and Retention of Qualified Police Personnel," International Association of Chiefs of Police, supported by a grant from the Bureau of Justice Assistance.)