Militarized Equipment Ad Hoc Meeting Minutes (9/2/25)

Meeting Minutes

Time: 6:35 PM - 7:31 PM

Attendees:

- **Chair:** Wilson Riles
- **Commissioner:** Sam Dawit
- **Alternate Commissioner:** Omar Farmer
- **A/LT:** Patrick Gonzalez
- **Acting Captain:** William Febel
- **Acting Captain: Omar** Daza-Quiroz
- **Featured Community Ad Hoc Member:** Stephen Geist
- **Featured Community Ad Hoc Member:**Tuan NGo
- **Chief of Staff:** Mykah Montgomery
- **OPD:** Kimatakaya Joseph
- **Community Participant:** Rajni Mandal, Orlando Johnson

Main Topics Discussed

1. **Draft Report Review**
    - Commissioners reviewed the revised draft of the militarized equipment report.
    - Acknowledged grammatical edits still needed; focus was on policy and equipment positions.
2. **Written Community Comments**
    - Received extensive comments from Tuan Ngo and others regarding Bearcats, militarized equipment, and public safety perceptions.
3. **Department Response**

- OPD noted Chief Mitchell was unavailable but would review the draft after returning.
- Acting Captain Febel and Lt. Gonzales presented preliminary input on rifles, Bearcat use, and drones.

4. **Equipment Issues**
   - **Patrol Rifles:** OPD's 70 patrol rifles are over 10 years old, nearing end-of-life. Proposal to replace them using asset forfeiture funds. Vendor LC Action confirmed as compliant with regulations.
   - **Bearcat Vehicle:** Strong debate about durability, alternatives, and prior commitments. Commissioners and OPD disagreed over whether alternatives were viable and whether the Bearcat should remain in OPD's inventory.
   - **Drones:** Proposal to expand drone inventory; concerns raised about potential data-sharing risks with ICE. OPD emphasized adherence to Policy 415, which prohibits such cooperation.
5. **Legal Framework**
   - Reviewed requirements under **Oakland Municipal Code 9.65** and **California AB 481** mandating annual reviews of militarized equipment use and policies.
   - Differing views on scope: whether Commission review should be limited to existing equipment use (per OMC) or also include new equipment requests.

Questions and Concerns Raised

- **Commissioners & Panelists**:
  - Whether militarized equipment improves public safety or risks excessive force.
  - Transparency of OPD maintenance records for Bearcats.
  - Potential bias in the draft being "one-sided" (raised by Geist and Dawit).
  - Risk of ICE indirectly accessing OPD drone or camera data.
  - Whether agreements from past OPD leadership regarding alternatives remain valid.
- **OPD Representatives**:
  - Asserted Bearcat durability is critical for officer safety against vehicle ramming.

    - Denied claims that Bearcat was frequently out of service.
    - Confirmed patrol rifles are failing and need timely replacement.
- **Community Members**:
    - Johnson questioned the overall necessity of military-grade vehicles in Oakland.
    - Concerns that investment in militarized equipment diverts resources from violence prevention and community priorities.

Suggestions and Recommendations

- Separate the **Bearcat debate** from the rest of the equipment review to avoid stalling the broader report.
- Approve replacement of existing rifles (not an expansion of inventory) since OPD confirmed intent is a one-for-one swap.
- Request comparative data on equipment inventories in **Fremont and San Jose** for context.
- Include **citations and sources** (as compiled by Commissioner Farmer) in the draft to strengthen credibility.
- Consider structured public education on the differences between community safety investments and militarized equipment.

Next Steps

1. **Redraft**: Commissioners will revise the report, incorporating tonight's discussion and community/OPD input.
2. **Chief's Input**: Chief Mitchell will provide formal comments upon his return.
3. **Citation List**: Commissioner Farmer's citations will be added back into the draft.
4. **Future Meeting**: Report expected to be brought before the **full Commission in early October** (first October meeting), allowing time for revisions and the Chief's review.
5. **Bearcat Issue**: May be separated into a **standalone discussion** for efficiency.

Adjournment

Chat Comments

00:02:39 William Febel: Apologies. My connection works best on audio only
00:34:45 Jennifer Tu: Thank you Ms Joseph for that interjection
00:38:17 Orlando Johnson (GREEN PARTY) California, A.C.C.G.P, O.GP (He: why do we need a bearcat, its useless,Oakland dosent have high profile crime every day. and to answer the question, The Oakland Police BearCat is an armored vehicle designed to withstand significant impacts from other vehicles with minimal damage, due to its heavy-duty, military-grade construction. In most collisions, the standard vehicle is badly damaged while the BearCat sustains minor cosmetic damage. so why do we need it.
00:42:05 William Febel: Thank you Mr. Ngo for the question. I will reach to those respective agencies to get their MEU inventory if they are willing to share so we may compare.
00:57:25 Jennifer Tu: My email if you would like to talk more about the interplay between city and state law - jtu@afsc.org
01:01:03 Tuan NGo: Please incorporate my comments from my Sept 2, 2025 6:09 pm email to the group into the notes for today's meeting.