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American Criminal Justice System (CJ311)

Final Assignment

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To explain the major issue of there being an inadequate number of emergency vehicles in my local community, I must first describe the demographics, geography, and culture of Guam. The Territory of Guam, also known as the Guam, USA, is an island in the Western Pacific Ocean and is an unincorporated territory of the United States. Guam's economy is mainly supported by tourism (90% of all visitors come from Japan) and a U.S. armed forces base. Guam is about 30 miles long and of variable width, about 8 miles maximum.

The roads of Guam are overcrowded and consequently in fairly poor condition, and there are always construction projects disrupting traffic in the busiest areas. To drive from the southern end to the northern end takes about two hours. It can take a lot longer if you adhere to the speed limits (45 mph is the maximum legal speed on Guam). Based on my own experience, the average driving speed on the island is over 55 mph in mostly 35 mph zones. In the max speed zones of 45 mph, it seems people drive 60+ mph.

Commonly trucks and cars (referred to as “boony” cars) on the island are dilapidated, rust ridden, dragging their rear on the road, have sparks flying, smoke blowing off, and their tires flattened by unsafe loads or sagging suspension. Another hazard on the roads of Guam is the high incidence of drug-impaired (alcohol and ice, mostly) drivers on Guam's roads. Drunks collide with pedestrians and cyclists nearly every month of the year.

Guam's weather, is a major factor contributing to the police department's issue with emergency vehicles. I have been told that Guam gets hit by an average of one typhoon every eight years. Guam is situated in the prime tropical cyclone formation area of the western Pacific, and cyclones can and do occur every month of the year. The

island lies in the path of tropical storms and typhoons that periodically sweep across the western Pacific bringing heavy winds as they travel from east to west. Generally, most of the tropical cyclones are in their formative stages near Guam. The typhoon season begins June 1 and runs through November 30. Guam's weather is often influenced by these systems, hence the slogan "Typhoon Alley" for the area of the Pacific ocean Guam is situated in.

The total population of the island is estimated at 154,623 people. Northern and Central Guam is densely populated and overdeveloped with the ugly little concrete bunkers that we live in here, because of typhoons. The population is much less dense in the South and the villages are less cluttered. Guam is composed of the following ethnic groups: Chamorro 47%, Filipino 25%, white 10%, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and other 18%. However the island is somewhat homogenous in religion; Roman Catholic 85%, and other 15%.

Guam Police Department (GPD) is comprised of nine divisions to operate four separate precincts; Dededo, Tamuning, Hagatna, and Agat. Like nearly all police departments, GPD exists to serve the community by protecting life and property by preventing crime, enforcing the laws, and maintaining order for all citizens.

GPD has not had enough police vehicles to patrol the island's highways and neighborhoods, since thirteen police units were damaged to some extent from the wraths of typhoons Chata'an and Halong in early 2002. Lieutenant Ray Perez of GPD told me the damaged cars were from all of the five precincts with the exception of one. Among the cars damaged, two were new; one also had a cooling system ruined and one had a slashed tire during a rescue attempt. Another vehicle was struck with a wooden

projectile, making it inoperable. Perez says there was at least six vehicles that were inoperable.

The most intense typhoon season in Guam was in 2002. Three separate typhoon systems passed directly over Guam--the last one was Super Typhoon Pongsona, which struck Guam on December, 8 2002. The storm left the island with over a modest estimate of 82 million dollars in damages. GPD was left with over 50 inoperable vehicles when the community needed them the most in helping rebuild the island.

Throughout the calendar year of 2003, GPD was struggling to find the cash to survive Fiscal Year 2004. GPD officers started being delayed in responding to emergencies, as money was running out. Sergeant Kim Santos of GPD confirmed operations for the Department were cut by \$950,000 for FY2004. The Department used an \$394,000 appropriation to cover operational expenses like utilities, gas coupons, building and auto maintenance, police reserve stipends and uniforms, contracts, rape kits and more. While lawmakers only appropriated \$394,000, an additional appropriation of \$700,000 for vehicle maintenance and new police cars was line item vetoed by Governor Felix Camacho.

Even with the appropriation, at the start of 2004, emergency responders were finding it harder and harder to do their jobs. Vehicles were in high demand, but short in supply. By January 2004, GPD had 35 inoperable vehicles that could still be repaired. GPD Supply & Support Division Captain Paul Suba said another 25 were dilapidated and would have to be turned over to the General Services Agency for disposal.

With only two full-time mechanics and inconsistent funding, Captain Suba said the situation was only likely to worsen. Additionally, several vehicles assigned to the

Highway Patrol Division were also down for various mechanical problems. He said when the parts were available the funding wasn't, or vice versa. Captain Suba added that if there were more vehicles, the Department would be able to rotate them. Currently, the force uses police cars on a "24/7" basis. The daily wear and tear causes problems with the brakes, tires, and engines. Funding has to be negotiated for and approved by the Government of Guam to purchase a new fleet of vehicles. The police department was working to get five new patrol cars and three new motorcycles for each precinct. Captain Suba says the recommendation was sitting on acting chief of police Major Earl Aguigui's desk for his disposition.

I believe the police department must press the government hard to receive funding to better their vehicle situation. A healthy fleet of police vehicles would start GPD to more effectively and efficiently serve the community. According to our course texts, motorized patrol leads to more efficient coverage of the city and quicker responses to calls for service. Citizens in Guam desire for there to be a more visible presence of officers "on the road" and faster response times for incidents called in. I expected GPD's top officials to push the issue of a new vehicle fleet hard with the government. Which they did. With their last request being approved by Guam's congress and then being vetoed by the Governor, I did not expect their request to fall through.

However, recently, The Department of the Interior's Office of Insular Affairs has given the Government of Guam the green light to use more than \$6,000,000 in Compact/impact money to purchase much-needed equipment for the Guam Police Department, Fire Department, and Hospital. According to the local newspaper, of the \$6M, at least \$3.6M will be used by the Hospital to purchase additional medications and

supplies. \$257,000 will be used by GFD to buy new ambulances, while GPD will make more than \$250,000 worth of improvements to its headquarters, and another \$1.1 million to upgrade its Law Enforcement Communications System. GPD will also use another million dollars to buy police vehicles. Finally, GPD will spend more than \$300,000 to purchase a new fire system for all of their precincts' jails.

Overall, the boost in the spending budget will bring Guam's first responder teams and criminal justice system as up to par. Citizens will now expect more from the police--faster response times, more arrests, and less overall crime--than they have received over the past few years since super-typhoon Pongsona.

I believe it is in GPD's best interest to save some of the funds allotted for vehicle repairs and replacement on a reoccurring basis. As to allow for an amount of money to always be immediately available following a destructive tropical storm. Unfortunately, I see GPD falling back in to their habit of spending every last cent getting back to 100% vehicle readiness, just to be crushed by a typhoon back below 50%. I they should not be curious to play the odds against the damaging effects of typhoon alley, and keep their readiness constant at around a 80%.

The most important piece of knowledge I gained from this course is the idea of the constant struggle in the American Criminal Justice System with balancing the needs and desires of criminals, victims, citizens, politicians, prisoners, police officers, and judges in respect to cost. It seems that even if we could design the percent justice system to eradicate crime and appease all parties involved, no budget could support it. The questions asked by most communities is "what is best way to deal with crime, but the cheapest too?" It seems the root of a lot of crimes--money--is what makes a justice

system so difficult to operate. I for one, do not have any radical new ideas to change this dilemma. However, I am now at least aware of this problem, so I can get more use out of the facts and opinions I have explored in this curriculum and in future courses.