

Memorandum



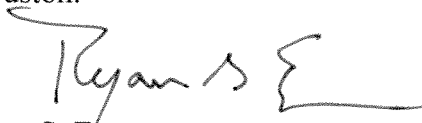
DATE: October 17, 2008

TO: Members of the Public Safety Committee

SUBJECT: **Letters Detail Officer's Time in Storm-Ravaged Texas**

Attached is a copy of "Letters Detail Officer's Time in Storm-Ravaged Texas" from the Officers who volunteered during the aftermath of Hurricane Ike. It will be presented to the Members of the Public Safety Committee on Monday, October 20, 2008.

There will also be a presentation of pictures of the Dallas Officers during their time in Houston.


Ryan S. Evans
First Assistant City Manager

alb

Attachment

Letters Detail Officer's Time in Storm-Ravaged Texas

Posted: October 3rd, 2008 02:33 PM GMT-05:00

When Hurricane Ike slammed into Texas last month, the storm left 51 people dead, and plunged parts of the state into chaos.

Police officers volunteered to journey to the worst-hit areas to keep the peace and help with recovery experts.

Sgt. Lawrence L. Nichols, a member of the Dallas Police Department was one of those officers. Nichols traveled to Houston. Below, is his first-hand account, as he told it to members of his department who stayed behind.

9-18

Our first day we got to the academy and started a briefing at 4pm with the Mayor, press, command staff. Dallas PD, Austin, Ft. Worth, and San Antonio were all represented. The mayor gave a good pep talk. The Houston PD is treating us very well. We then checked into a very nice hotel, I feel guilty staying here, as do many of the guys, with all the amenities, when I came down here to help people who don't even have power.

9-22

The second and subsequent days we met at the convention center, paired up with a Houston officer and went out on patrol. Normally we would return to our respective stations and have a smaller detail. The Houston officers have been great to work with and very hospitable. Although their paperwork, procedures, uniforms, etc. are very different, there are a lot of things that are universal in police work, so we all seem to get along great. We are learning their lingo, which is a lot different as well, and learning to communicate on their radios. One example is that they call their vehicles "shops". When their Captain said "make sure you keep gas in your shops". We had no idea what he was talking about.

Most of us have made numerous arrests and have had a great time. Many of us have been in foot chases and other common police incidents. Their paperwork on an arrest is very time consuming and paper intensive. I thank God for our system and will never grip about it again.

9-25

Things are going along good here. We continue to work the streets with Houston PD and the other



Sgt. Lawrence L. Nichols



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agencies here. We were told in detail that violent crime was down 38 percent from the same time last year, largely in part to the task force's presence. The Dallas Task force has made some of the biggest and best arrest since we have been here.

The Dallas officers are doing a great job and I continually receive praise from numerous Houston supervisors about their professionalism and work ethic. I think even the Houston officers are surprised by the ability of the Dallas officers to find guns and large amounts of drugs while still operating in a professional manner.

It is time like these that I take pride in being a Dallas Police Officer. I also need to give credit to the City and the command staff for letting us come down here. We have been taken care of down here by the Houston Police Department and we were taken care of before we left by the City of Dallas. We were all issued brand new Verizon push to talk phones before we left, which we use quite a bit down here. Chief Cato made sure we had 11 decent squad cars to drive down here. Lt. Gerdes in police technology provided us with a laptop with an air card, which we use to do payroll, check emails and do spreadsheets. Personnel made sure our payroll needs were handled quickly before we left.

9-29

Not much new to report to you. Sunday night was our first night with the Crime Response Unit (CRU). We are getting to see more of the City because this unit works all over the city. Driving around in the daytime you really see how widespread the damage is. Just about every street has a building damaged or a sign or traffic light knocked down. It will take them years to fix it all.

I think that being away from our families and 12 hours shifts is starting to wear on some of us; I know it is on me. When I was younger it was a lot easier to work all the time. Houston PD continues to treat us well. Many of the officers are treated just like regular partners while we are work. Austin PD left a few days ago. All the outside agencies are now in the same unit. We are working closer with San Antonio, Ft. Worth and Mansfield.

Now that the curfew has been lifted it is getting even busier on the streets. There are still areas without power and we mostly concentrate in those areas and their surrounding neighborhoods. We are still on track to leave here Saturday.

10-3

You know you have been away too long when you start to get comfortable in your hotel room. We all have enjoyed our time here, but we are all ready to come home. I was joking with the guys that they are sending us to Galveston Saturday. They all were ready to go, but said they wanted to go home for a couple of days and then would be ready to go help down there. I continue to be impressed with these officers and their willingness to go the extra mile to help out.



Sgt. Lawrence L. Nichols



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Our time with CRU has been great. The HPD officers have been on 12 hour shifts with no days off for over three weeks and they are exhausted but are still at it. The DPD officers have helped with numerous great arrests.

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