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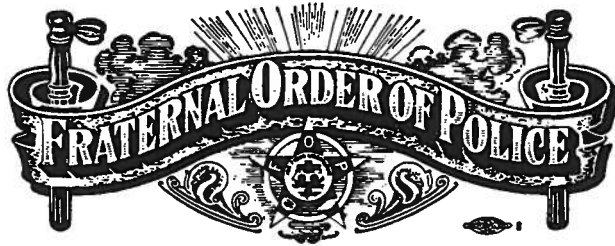
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HOUSE JUDICIARY SUBCOMMITTEE

November 13, 1997

On behalf of the 35,000 members of the Fraternal Order of Police as well as State President Francis Paul Bascelli, I thank the House Judiciary Subcommittee for the opportunity to testify on the issue of "Rogue Police Officers."

There is tremendous concern among the law enforcement professionals and members of our communities regarding police officers making traffic stops, particularly while patrolling in an unmarked vehicle and most particularly at night. The idea of prohibiting law enforcement from making such stops in unmarked cars seems to have gained some support. While I understand the concern I must respectfully disagree with the concept. Many good arrests arise from what people view as "a simple traffic stop." Officers in unmarked cars have a greater advantage over the officer in a marked unit in that they have with them the element of surprise.

Several months ago, the Fraternal Order of Police took the initiative to address this issue by forming a task force consisting of representatives from groups that might be affected by this issue.

The Committee consisted of: The Fraternal Order of Police, Pennsylvania Chief's of Police Association, The Pennsylvania State Troopers Association, The Pennsylvania State Police, The Pennsylvania Paid Firefighters Association, The Volunteer Firefighters Association, Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, and others.

The Task Force discussed the concern of officers making traffic stops in unmarked cars and came up with two major issues contributing to this problem. The first problem identified was the matter of the light bars. It seems anyone can virtually obtain light bars or bubble lights personally. While there are some restrictions for their use, they are not enforced. The second area of concern was the uniforms. There are many non-police agencies wearing uniforms very similar to those worn by police officers. We attempted to address these two areas.

The general consensus of the group was there is too much confusion regarding what light colors belong to what group. There were volunteer firefighters and fire police who were permitted to have red and blue lights mounted on their personal vehicles. Other volunteer groups were permitted blue lights only and then there was the matter of the yellow lights. It was very confusing to us so we could well imagine how the public must feel. Our general consensus was that police vehicles only should be permitted and authorized to mount the combination of red and blue lights on their marked or unmarked cars. The volunteer groups that are currently allowed the red and blue combination would be allowed red lights only. The volunteer groups currently allowed to exhibit blue lights would remain the same.

The other area that we feel greatly contributes to the concern of unmarked cars in the matter of the uniform. There are far too many look-a-likes or people who want to be police officers but for whatever reason cannot be a police officer. Most private security agencies outfit their guards in uniforms very similar to that of the local police agency. This is done, in my opinion, purposely to give the guards the appearance of being police officers and therefore appearing to have more authority than they actually possess. The same is true with the Pennsylvania State Constables. Their uniforms are virtually identical to that of the Pennsylvania State Troopers, even down to their patch.

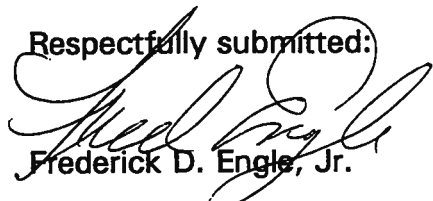
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Security Guards and Constables have a very distinctive job to perform. That job is not to be a police officer and therefore not give the appearance of being a police officer. There is no reason for either group to have any lights mounted on their vehicles and they should not give the appearance of being police officers. Their uniforms should be distinctly different from law enforcement. By mandating that Security Guards work in slacks and blazers with Constables either in similar fashion or a distinctly different uniform than a law enforcement officer, we feel would help reduce the incidents that may be occurring involving people who are not police officers making traffic stops.

We respectfully request the legislature not to take another tool from law enforcement. We are committed to working with this body in an attempt to address the concerns surrounding this issue. It would be our recommendation that for an officer to make a traffic stop while in an unmarked car there would be four requirements: first, activate the red and blue light combination; second, activate the audible warning device, third, that the officer be in full uniform and fourth, that the officer activate the interior dome light.

Thank you for this opportunity to voice our concerns.

Respectfully submitted:



Frederick D. Engle, Jr.