



# SOMERSET COUNTY PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE

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Newsletter  
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## MESSAGE FROM THE PROSECUTOR

Since the tragic events of the Oklahoma bombing on April 19, 1995, the Columbine High School killings on April 20, 1999, the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, and now the use of such biological agents as anthrax, the responsibilities of law enforcement have significantly increased.

Many of us grew up in a time after the Depression and our parents and grandparents fighting to maintain our freedom during World War II. In fact, since the conclusion of the Vietnam War, little has negatively affected the safety and security of the lives of Americans, either at home or abroad. Unfortunately, that has now changed.

Since the Oklahoma bombing, law enforcement began to better control access to government buildings by installing more metal detectors, X-ray devices, surveillance cameras and other security measures in order to better protect and serve those citizens who work at or frequent those buildings. Never before did we have to think about or protect ourselves against national terrorism of this magnitude. Now we do.

issues summonses through a computer system that is located at headquarters. Consequently, the officer must return to headquarters to issue the summons. This procedure leaves the officer with a number of options. First, the officer can request that the offender voluntarily follow the officer to headquarters in his own vehicle or report to headquarters at another time to receive his summons. Alternatively, the officer may record the offender's pedigree information, including address, and personally serve the summons upon the offender or leave a copy of the summons at the individual's residence with a competent member of the household age 14 or older. R. 4:4-4(a)(1) via R. 3:3-3(d) and R. 7:2-4(b)(1).

Finally, the officer can mail a copy of the summons, via regular and certified mail, return receipt requested, to the offender's residence. R. 4:4-4(b)(1)(c) via R. 3:3-3(d) and R. 7:2-3(b)(1). If the offender fails to respond to the mailed summons, the officer may request that an arrest warrant be issued for the offender in accordance with R. 3:3-1(c) because the defendant has been served with a summons and failed to appear and there is reason to believe that the defendant will not appear in response to a summons. R. 3:3-1(c)(2) and (c)(6); R. 7:2-2(b)(1) and (b)(5); see also R. 7:2-2(c).

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**POLICE EXECUTIVE FORUM**

LITTLE GREEN ARMY MEN  
By: Chief Robert A. Verry  
South Bound Brook Police Department

His mom screams to him from the living room while he sits on the floor in the bedroom he shares with his older brother. Even at four years old he understands that sharing is necessary, although some day he wishes he would have a bedroom to call his very own. The bedroom floor is partially carpeted, however in the area where he is playing it is hardwood that in his estimation has too much wax. He thinks this because it shines so bright that the reflections from his little green army men gleam back at him. As he puts the handful of figures he was playing with on his bed, which is located nearest the window, he wonders what his mother wants that she yells so loudly and so repeatedly. He quickly responds to her because he knows if he does not she will probably think he is ignoring her and she will be disappointed.

As he enters the hallway he observes his mom looking out the picture bay window located on the west side of the apartment complex. His mother calls to him and as he moves towards her, he sees red glaring lights bouncing off the ledge that is painted an eggshell satin color. He instantly realizes why his mom was calling him and why she screamed loud enough to get him there in a hurry.

In front of his apartment there was a South Bound Brook Police Officer with a marked police car who has just made a traffic stop. His mom knew that he loved nothing more than watching a police officer's red lights flickering on every surface around him. Oh, how he loved sitting on the bay window with his mom, watching the uniformed cop on the roadside thinking to himself that, "One day I want to be just like him."

As time went on he continued to be fascinated by the officer at the roadside making a traffic stop. Although he did not know what the officer was doing with the car he had stopped, he did know that there was

something about what he was watching that made each opportunity to observe a stop more enchanting. He would listen to his friends who would tell him that they wanted to be a "detective" and he thought to himself, "What's a detective?" He thought, "Was a detective the officer that I watched with my mom who was making traffic stops on Main Street?" Eventually, he asked his friends to tell him what a detective was and he remembers his best friend Bob telling him that "Starsky and Hutch" were detectives and "he wanted to be just like them because they knew how to catch the bad guy in under an hour." What was mesmerizing was that Bob would tell him about his first contact with cops and, ironically enough, Bob's experience was parallel to his. Bob told how he loved watching the flashing lights and how he visualized himself in the patrol cruiser using the radio like a walkie-talkie.

It was at this moment that he understood when and truly why a kid would want to become one of the elite men and women in society who wear the blue uniform. He realized from talking with his friend Bob that the thought of being a police officer does not begin with a young child watching television. It also does not come from personal communication with a detective, because in a child's adolescent and teenage years contact with a detective is actually minimal. The desire to be a law enforcement officer starts when a young child sees for the first time a cop making a traffic stop. Those stops are something that will stay with all children for the rest of their lives. The stop will not be remembered in such detail because of the reason behind the stop or because of the vehicle that committed a traffic violation. Instead, it will be remembered for the uniform, the marked patrol vehicle, and the impressionable red lights.

That young boy will never forget how he looked out his window with his parent and watched as a well dressed adult exited his car with pride. How the officer approached the vehicle in front of him displaying a complete sense of confidence and respect for himself and the profession. That youngster will never forget seeing the marked patrol vehicle that stands separate from all other vehicles on the road simply because of the imprints on its side advertising to the public the department's pride, integrity, courage, and commitment. Finally, the most impressionable thing that will last forever in that little boy's mind will be how, while standing next to his mother, he first saw the visions that made him know for the first time that he wanted to be a police officer.

It is that stop and image nestled into every young child's memory that sows a seed that will last a lifetime. That impression is not one of being a homicide detective or for that matter a detective at all, however it comes from watching a police officer making a traffic stop. If the average citizen ever has contact with a police officer, it is an officer executing a traffic stop. As a result the traffic officer is more than just another officer on the police force, but also the one person who has the greatest opportunity to broadcast the department's mission statement to the public.

Not only is the department's ideology being spread to the public by the traffic officer, but studies have "shown that more illegal guns are taken off the street through traffic stops than through any other tactic" and, as estimated by the Drug Enforcement Administration, "forty percent of all drug arrests in this country are the outgrowth of traffic stops." It is also common knowledge that some of the most notable criminals in U.S. History, like Timothy McVeigh and Ted Bundy, have been apprehended during a traffic stop. Timothy McVeigh was stopped for speeding and having no license plate following the bombing of the Federal building in Oklahoma City. Ted Bundy was captured twice during two separate traffic stops. The first time Bundy was stopped he was arrested for the

kidnapping of Carole DeRonch after an ice-pick, handcuffs, rope, and a plastic trash bag were discovered in his vehicle. After escaping prison he was later arrested once again as the result of a traffic stop for possession of a stolen Volkswagen. He was thereafter charged with the several murders he committed while being a fugitive. Closer to home, a New Jersey State Trooper stopped and arrested a motorist on the turnpike who turned out to be a terrorist transporting explosives. Additionally, every day traffic officers across the country are arresting motorists for drug and gun possession, for being fugitives, and for countless other crimes or offenses.

To illustrate one of the positive impacts of having a dedicated traffic enforcement team one should look no further than their own department's statistics. The statistician should compare the amount of arrests achieved by way of a traffic stop measured against any other methods within their agency. For example, in South Bound Brook 61% of all arrests came as a result of traffic stops. A determined traffic enforcement team should also be able to show a decrease in violent and non-violent crimes, traffic crashes, reactive responses, and citizen complaints (e.g. noise complaints). At the same time drunk driving arrests, traffic citations, proactive responses, and custodial arrests will undoubtedly increase. This can best be demonstrated by looking at the Peoria, Illinois Police Department who "re-emphasized traffic enforcement as a primary function and a tool for all Peoria Police Officers." Over a three year period from 1994 to 1996, Peoria, under their new enforcement philosophy, realized a 24% growth in Traffic Citations, 28% increase in Officer Initiated Activities, 16% growth in Custodial Arrests, and 11% more Drunk Driving Arrests. At the same time there was a 21% decline in Crashes, 6% decrease in Citizen Complaints, 10% fewer Violent Crimes, and a 12% reduction in Property Crimes.

Police administrators consistently devote manpower, equipment, and other resources to the reduction of crime. They should continue to do so. However, the facts and figures cited above dictate that a concentrated review of traffic related episodes is essential. In 1998 the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimated that the nation experiences one murder every 31 minutes, while during the same thirty-one minute time span there were nearly two and one-half fatalities, 116 injuries and 372 car crashes.

The data suggests that more effort should be placed on traffic enforcement and that all police officers in the country should re-familiarize themselves with the traffic laws, case law and the Fourth Amendment. At the same time, the police executive should promote a strong traffic enforcement staff and give them enough time and latitude to make the difference. Administration will realize in a short time period that this joint effort will build a safer community. This endeavor, while diminishing the number of fatalities, injuries, and crashes will also lead to a decrease in property and violent crimes, as well as assaults. Not only will the officer be more visible to the people, thereby constructing a security blanket of protection, but at the same time a more visible police presence will be something for the criminal element to fear.

Every traffic officer is unconsciously the catalyst for a youngster who glances out the picture window wishing that one day he can fill that officer's shoes. Although leaving this memory on a small child's mind is invaluable, it is not the only priceless thing that a traffic officer will give to the department. He will ensure that the streets are protected, allowing that innocent youngster to roam independently without the concern of shadows on the horizon until such time when that youth can personally take the oath of office as a Law Enforcement Officer.