

# Disputed Phoenix police kidnapping grant is defended to panel

## Officer: Data under fire not in application

by **William Hermann** - Apr. 12, 2011 12:00 AM  
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The commander who landed the Phoenix Police Department a \$1.7 million federal grant to fight kidnappings and home invasions suggested to a city review panel Monday that those arguing over the grant should read the original application.

Considerable controversy surrounds the grant, with critics alleging that the department deliberately inflated kidnapping statistics to obtain it. The department and its top officials dismiss the allegations as untrue.

Cmdr. Kim Humphrey, who wrote the grant application, said information now being challenged by critics was never part of the original grant document. He defended the department's handling of the grant.

Phoenix Police Chief Jack Harris was removed as the department's chief in March when city officials held him responsible for first calling statistics used to support the grant rock-solid and then conceding they were not.

When Harris was removed, City Manager David Cavazos said an independent panel would review the processes used to land the grant and generate reports that supported it.

Appearing before the panel Monday, Phoenix Law Enforcement Association President Mark Spencer charged that departmental reports were "re-labeled" to suggest a greater problem with kidnappings than, in fact, existed.

Spencer said 75 percent of the reports "are not 'border-related' as defined by the chief." He said he believed Harris fudged the numbers. "Intention rises to the surface when experts cry foul and (the chief) did nothing about it," Spencer said.

He was referring to Sgt. Phil Roberts as one of those experts. Roberts also spoke, saying he had told superiors that the numbers being used to justify the grant were suspect.

The panel has heard much testimony regarding 358 departmental reports, used after the grant application was filed, to document a problem with kidnappings and home invasions, many of which were "border-related," meaning they involved illegal immigrants or drug smuggling.

Humphrey said when he wrote the grant, he interviewed police personnel who described a major kidnapping and home-invasion problem.

"We had seen a significant increase in these crimes," Humphrey said. "But we did not want to be too specific (in the grant)."

He said the grant stated that there were "over 300" kidnappings and home invasions, and "we did not specifically say every one was border-related - we were very general."

The panel has heard from police and city auditors who said that though many reports first pulled to document kidnapping and home-invasion problems did not stand up to scrutiny, many subsequently pulled do document those problems.

Phoenix Assistant Chief Andy Anderson said, "In fact, the problem was underreported."

Anderson admitted that a significant number of the reports originally pulled "could have been better-chosen; but nobody lied about anything."