

# Phoenix officers claim kidnapping figures may have been fudged to score stimulus money

By: Jennifer Parks ABC15

PHOENIX - The Phoenix Law Enforcement Association is now getting into a fight defending a Phoenix police sergeant who claims the department inflated kidnapping numbers to get more federal stimulus money.

"We need to obtain federal money without trading truth," aid Mark Spencer, President of PLEA. "I think there was some truth trading here."

Allegations the Phoenix Police Department says are false.

"That is absolutely incorrect," said Sgt. Tommy Thompson. "We've given these numbers and we've been open about it."

The battle started this week, when Phoenix police Sgt. Phil Roberts, a 24-year veteran of the force sent a memo to the Phoenix City Manager accusing the department of inflating the kidnapping numbers to get \$1.7 million in stimulus money.

"Frequently when you work with the federal government as long as the problem persists the money keeps flowing," said Spencer. "The bigger the problem, the more money you get."

Spencer says the department reported 358 kidnappings in 2008, but he believes when one looks at comparable Valley cities the numbers are more like 40 or 50.

"One would almost say it's criminal to report an inaccurate number," he said. "When there's an inability to break out those numbers accurately."

But Phoenix police are standing by the numbers saying they come from the crime analysis and research unit.

"We follow the criteria and establishment of Title 13," Sgt. Thompson said. "If it's a kidnapping, it's a kidnapping and that's what we count as a kidnapping."

While the department won't comment on why Sgt. Roberts left the HIKE unit, which handles kidnappings, they questioned why he's coming out with these accusations nearly a year after leaving the unit.

Thompson said Roberts gave those same numbers kidnapping numbers on national television back in February of 2009.

"I find that interesting because on Feb. 4, 2009, that same employee was quoted on national news saying the year prior we had 359 kidnappings," Thompson said.

Spencer said PLEA is asking for an investigation by an outside agency.

Phoenix police said they would welcome any investigation to verify their system of tracking crime statistics.