



State of Tennessee

Justin P. Wilson, State Comptroller

For Immediate Release: Sept. 30, 2010

Former Monterey Police Chief Took Cash and Guns from the Police Department, Comptroller's Investigation Shows

An investigation by the Comptroller's Division of Municipal Audit found almost \$30,000 worth of cash and property missing from the Monterey Police Department.

The investigative report, which was released today, details how the police department's books failed to account for \$23,613 in cash.

For example, the report shows that former police chief Tim Murphy obtained \$14,920 in cash from confidential narcotic investigation transactions even though there was no evidence the funds were used for police purposes.

The former police chief also received more than \$5,400 in cash from the sale of vehicles seized by and forfeited to the Monterey Police Department that was never turned over to the city clerk's office or deposited into the a city bank account.

Additionally, a total of \$3,274 seized during narcotics arrests was also missing. The report cites Murphy as the individual ultimately responsible for all of the cash.

Investigators also discovered that six new weapons purchased by the police department, worth more than \$2,500, were missing. According to the report, at least seven additional retired service weapons or the proceeds from their sale were also missing.

Murphy indicated to city officials that the retired weapons were either traded for new ones or officers purchased their old weapons directly from the department. However, auditors were unable to find any deposit records indicating the weapons were sold to the officers and, according to the department's weapons vendor, no weapons were traded in by the former police chief when the new service weapons were purchased.

According to court documents, in 1997 Murphy was responsible for purchasing a weapon for the Monterey Police Department that was allegedly used in a homicide.

Murphy, then a Monterey patrol officer, purchased two Smith & Wesson 9 millimeter handguns in Rossville, Georgia. Although the guns were supposed to be used by the department, Murphy instead sold them to private citizens. One of the handguns was apparently later used by Byron

“Low Tax” Looper to murder state Senator Tommy Burks.

State auditors also found more than \$1,200 in other missing property - including a tactical strobe light for an assault rifle and a \$250 wrist watch that was confiscated by the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation from Murphy when he met with state auditors and the TBI. Additionally, the investigation uncovered ammunition purchased by the police department that appeared to be incompatible with the department’s service weapons.

Murphy admitted to investigators that he had taken cash and property from the Monterey Police Department that he was not entitled to and used it for his own personal benefit.

The report also cites the improper use of the city’s tax-exempt status by members of the police department and a \$1,261 cell phone bill that Murphy racked up from roaming charges on his city-issued phone during a personal trip to Central America. And the report cites several weaknesses in the police department’s cash collection and receipting procedures when dealing with seized and confiscated cash and property.

Murphy pleaded guilty to official misconduct and theft of property over \$10,000 last week in Putnam County Criminal Court. Sentencing is scheduled for Dec. 14.

“Clearly, Mr. Murphy’s actions represent an egregious abuse of the public trust,” Comptroller Justin P. Wilson said. “That kind of conduct cannot be tolerated. I commend our auditors and the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation officials for the work they did on this case. And I hope this case will serve as a warning that there are consequences for those who misuse public funds.”

“It is disappointing when public officials abuse their positions for personal gain and it is particularly disheartening when it is a police chief who is responsible for the safety of the entire community,” added Dennis Dycus, director of the Comptroller’s Division of Municipal Audit.

The report can be viewed online at: http://www.comptroller1.state.tn.us/RA_MA/

-30-

Media contact: Blake Fontenay, Communications Director, (615) 253-2668 or blake.fontenay@tn.gov

[Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury](http://www.comptroller1.state.tn.us/RA_MA/)
State Capitol Nashville, TN 37243
Phone: (615) 741-2501
Email: comptroller.web@tn.gov