

Cobb County Police Department

Policy 3.18

SURVEILLANCE, UNDERCOVER, AND DECOY OPERATIONS

Effective Date: May 1, 2016	
Rescinds: Policy 3.18 (July 20, 2012)	
Related Orders: None	
Issued By: Chief J.R. Houser	Page 1 of 3
The words “he, his, him,” which may appear in this policy, are used generically for clarity and ease of reading. These terms are not meant to imply gender and relate to all employees of the Department.	

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for surveillance, undercover and decoy operations.

I. SURVEILLANCE OPERATIONS

Surveillance is the secretive observation of a person, place, or vehicle. Surveillance can be used effectively to gather information or evidence of illegal activity, or in the case of a stakeout, to apprehend criminals after a pattern has been identified. Surveillance operations should be well planned prior to implementation. Guidelines for planning operations include:

- A.** Crimes and victims should be analyzed to determine the nature and scope of personnel, equipment, and activities required to safely and effectively conduct the operation.
- B.** Probable offenders and their habits, associates, vehicles, methods of operation, or any other pertinent information which will affect the manner of surveillance and potential prosecution should be identified and analyzed.
- C.** Officers involved in the surveillance operation should be familiarized with the neighborhood or target area.
- D.** Operational procedures should be determined for observation, arrests, and “tails” to ensure the continuity between the planning and the conduct of the surveillance operation.
- E.** Means for routine and emergency communication will be established.
- F.** Equipment and vehicles appropriate for the operation will be provided.

3.18 Surveillance, Undercover, and Decoy Operations

Page 2 of 3

- G.** The 911 Communications Center and the uniform supervisor of the area of surveillance should be notified of the nature and location of the operation prior to implementation, as circumstances dictate.

II. UNDERCOVER OPERATIONS

Undercover operations shall be planned in accordance with Departmental guidelines established in this section. These guidelines include:

- A.** All suspects that are a target or become the target of the undercover operation will be identified and analyzed. This identification and analysis should include a determination of their criminal history, known associates, weapons proficiency, and any other available background information that would be important for members conducting the operation to be aware.
- B.** Contact will be made with the suspects when determined appropriate and necessary, when all necessary and reasonable precautions are taken.
- C.** The neighborhood or target area where officers will work should be analyzed and surveyed prior to infiltration to determine and identify hazardous and potentially dangerous areas. Locations for surveillance points will also be identified.
- D.** Officers involved in the operation will be provided with false identity and disguises as necessary.
 - 1. Only officers and supervisors involved in the operation will have the information.
 - 2. Copies of the false credentials provided to the officers will be kept secured in the precinct/unit office.
- E.** Officers involved in the operation will be provided necessary equipment to include:
 - 1. Vehicle(s)
 - 2. Weapons
 - 3. Communications equipment
 - 4. Surveillance equipment.
- F.** Means for routine and emergency communications should be established. This will be determined on a case-by-case basis.
- G.** Prior to the operation, a meeting with the prosecutor's office may be scheduled to determine the legal ramifications of the operation.
- H.** Arrests should be made with the backup of another officer or another officer readily available.

- I. Personnel involved in undercover operations should be closely supervised.

III. DECOY OPERATIONS

Decoy operations will be planned in accordance with the guidelines established in this section. Victims, crimes, and crime locations will be analyzed with the assistance of intelligence information to determine the modus operandi of the perpetrators. When appropriate, officers will disguise themselves to resemble victims. A determination will be made based on the analysis of the situation deploying an adequate number of backup officers for security and protection. Operational procedures for each maneuver will be developed to determine appropriate locations for observation and arrest. Other measures include:

- A. The prosecutor may be consulted as needed to determine the legal ramifications.
- B. Means for communications will be established. Whenever possible, decoy equipment and cameras will be used to record the decoy operation.
- C. Participating personnel will be identified beforehand with a complete description of their vehicles and clothing provided to all involved personnel.
- D. Officers involved in the decoy operation will be closely supervised.