



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

February 18, 2009

Mr. Charles H. Weir
Assistant City Attorney
City of San Antonio
P.O. Box 839966
San Antonio, Texas 78283-3966

OR2008-02103

Dear Mr. Weir:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under the Public Information Act (the "Act"), chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 335135 (ORR 2008-2006).

The San Antonio Police Department (the "department") received a request for a copy of a specified investigation file. You claim that the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information, a portion of which consists of a representative sample.¹ We have also received and considered comments submitted by the requestor. *See* Gov't Code § 552.304 (providing that interested party may submit comments stating why information should or should not be released).

Initially, we note that the department failed to comply with section 552.301 of the Government Code in requesting this decision. Section 552.301 prescribes procedures that must be followed in asking this office to decide whether requested information is excepted from public disclosure. *See* Gov't Code § 552.301(a). Section 552.301(b) provides that a governmental body must ask for the attorney general's decision and claim its exceptions to disclosure no later than the tenth business day after the date of its receipt of the written

¹We assume that the "representative sample" of records submitted to this office is truly representative of the requested records as a whole. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 499 (1988), 497 (1988). This open records letter does not reach, and therefore does not authorize the withholding of, any other requested records to the extent that those records contain substantially different types of information than that submitted to this office.

request for information. *See id.* § 552.301(b). Section 552.301(e) requires a governmental body to submit to this office, no later than the fifteenth business day after the date of its receipt of the request, (1) written comments stating why the governmental body's claimed exceptions apply to the information at issue; (2) a copy of the request for information; (3) a signed statement of the date on which the governmental body received the request or evidence sufficient to establish that date; and (4) the specific information that the governmental body seeks to withhold or representative samples if the information is voluminous. *See id.* § 552.301(e)(1)(A)-(D). You inform us that the department received the request for information on October 22, 2008. You submitted the department's request for this decision on December 8, 2008. Thus, the department has failed to comply with the requirements of section 552.301.

A governmental body's failure to comply with the requirements of section 552.301 results in the legal presumption that the requested information is public and must be released unless the governmental body demonstrates a compelling reason to withhold the information from disclosure. *See Gov't Code* § 552.302; *Hancock v. State Bd. of Ins.*, 797 S.W.2d 379, 381-82 (Tex. App.—Austin 1990, no writ) (governmental body must make compelling demonstration to overcome presumption of openness pursuant to statutory predecessor to section 552.302); Open Records Decision No. 319 (1982). The presumption that information is public under section 552.302 can be overcome by demonstrating that the information is confidential by law or third-party interests are at stake. *See Open Records Decision Nos.* 630 at 3 (1994), 325 at 2 (1982). The need of a governmental body, other than the agency that is seeking an open records decision, to withhold information under section 552.108 of the Government Code can provide a compelling reason to withhold information from disclosure. Open Records Decision No. 586 (1991). Because you inform us that the U.S. Attorney's Office objects to the release of the submitted information, we will consider your claim under section 552.108.

Section 552.108 excepts from disclosure "[i]nformation held by a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime . . . if . . . release of the information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime[.]" *Gov't Code* § 552.108(a)(1). A governmental body must reasonably explain how and why section 552.108 is applicable to the information at issue. *See id.* § 552.301(e)(1)(A); *Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977). You inform us that the submitted information is related to an ongoing criminal investigation by the U.S. Attorney's Office and that the U.S. Attorney's Office has asked that the information be withheld from disclosure because its release could interfere with the ongoing investigation and prosecution of this case. Based on this representation, we conclude that the release of this information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime. *See Houston Chronicle Publ'g Co. v. City of Houston*, 531 S.W.2d 177 (Tex. Civ. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1975), *writ ref'd n.r.e.*, 536 S.W.2d 559 (Tex. 1976) (court delineates law enforcement interests that are present in active cases).

However, section 552.108 does not except from disclosure basic information about an arrested person, an arrest, or a crime. Gov't Code § 552.108(c). Basic information refers to the information held to be public in *Houston Chronicle*. Thus, with the exception of the basic front-page offense and arrest information, the department may withhold the submitted information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code

This letter ruling is limited to the particular information at issue in this request and limited to the facts as presented to us; therefore, this ruling must not be relied upon as a previous determination regarding any other information or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For more information concerning those rights and responsibilities, please visit our website at http://www.oag.state.tx.us/open/index_orl.php, or call the Office of the Attorney General's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. Questions concerning the allowable charges for providing public information under the Act must be directed to the Cost Rules Administrator of the Office of the Attorney General at (512) 475-2497.

Sincerely,



Adam Leiber
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

ACL/jb

Ref: ID# 335135

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)