

Career Issues from American Police Beat

Quality Control Is A Big Issue In Search For Cops

According to a recent story in *USA Today* by Kevin Johnson, the latest police entrance exam results leave a little bit to be desired.

Out of the finalists eligible for 400 available jobs in the city of Las Vegas this year, at least 70 percent are expected to fail the required background and polygraph examinations.

Officials say the reasons for those failures are attempts to conceal a range of criminal activities from prostitution to fraud and drug use.

The washout rate is alarming to Las Vegas police officials because they plan to hire at least 400 officers every year for the next five years to keep up with the region's explosive growth.

The difficulties are obviously a nationwide problem for law enforcement recruiters. In Phoenix, more than a third of the qualified applicants are failing polygraph examinations.

In Orlando, about half of the applicants are failing critical pre-polygraph interviews.

One of the candidates for an officer position with the Orlando PD flew in for an interview earlier this year and was dismissed after listing two fraudulent college degrees that the candidate had purchased online, Sgt. Christine Gigicos, Orlando's recruiting unit director, told *USA Today's* Kevin Johnson in a recent interview.

"As much as we tell 'em not to lie, they come in here and lie, and they think we're not going to find out. Maybe

they forget: We are the police," Vegas Sgt. Dan Zehnder told Johnson.

Many experts say the problems with finding qualified and ethical people for the job go back about seven years.

That was when the federal government began phasing out a Clinton administration police-hiring program called C.O.P.S., which was aimed at adding 100,000 to the ranks across the company.

But five years into protracted war, recruits that would have applied for public safety positions are largely overseas in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Many of the vacancies have been created as the result of agency expansion designed to deal with rapid community growth and the steady retirements of babyboomer officers.

Last year, an analysis of Justice Department data found that the deployment of thousands of local officers to Iraq and Afghanistan as military reservists was outstripping the pace of them.

The study determined that 11,380 officers were called for military reserve service in 2003, compared with just 2,600 new police hires.

Jeremy Wilson, associated director of the RAND Center on Quality Policing, says the national law enforcement hiring market is caught in its own "perfect storm" stoked by intense competition for a shrinking universe of applicants even as departments have mounted aggressive recruiting campaigns. ●

The Top Ten Signs The Recruitment Crisis Is Real...

1. Rusty, the K-9, just made sergeant.
2. You lowered the fitness standard to "getting in and out of car without being winded."
3. Half the incoming class has spent time in the joint.
4. The whole force consists of you and three mannequins.
5. Your agency is looking into cloning.
6. Sheriff Shaq.
7. The recruitment guy is handing out drink tickets.
8. 200 vacancies for 350 sworn positions.
9. The cast of "Armed and Famous" are getting job offers at the FBI.
10. Among the top positions at DHS, 24 percent are vacant.

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