



U.S. Department of Justice

Office of Legislative Affairs

Office of the Assistant Attorney General

Washington, D.C. 20530

JUN 12 2018

The Honorable Michael R. Pence
President
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. President:

Enclosed please find the Department of Justice (Department) Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) Annual Report on the Rafael Ramos and Wenjian Liu National Blue Alert Act to Congress (Pub. L. No. 114-12). Under the National Blue Alert Act, the Department is required to develop the national Blue Alert framework; determine and designate an Advisory Board; create voluntary guidelines for States; and identify and address the challenges facing States as they try to implement Blue Alert.

The Report focuses on the work of the COPS Office and the status and updates of the implementation of the National Blue Alert Act through early May 2018. Since designation of the COPS Office Director as the National Blue Alert Coordinator in June of 2016, the COPS Office has made tremendous progress in implementing the National Blue Alert Act, including a unanimous vote by the Federal Communications Commission to approve the creation of a dedicated Emergency Alert System event code for Blue Alerts.

We hope this information is helpful. Please do not hesitate to contact this office if we may provide additional assistance regarding this or any other matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Prim Escalona".

Prim F. Escalona

Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General

Enclosure



U.S. Department of Justice

Office of Legislative Affairs

Office of the Assistant Attorney General

Washington, D.C. 20530

JUN 12 2018

The Honorable Orrin G. Hatch
President Pro Tempore
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. President:

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JUN 12 2018

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Leader:

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JUN 12 2018

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Leader:

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JUN 12 2018

The Honorable Paul D. Ryan
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Speaker:

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JUN 12 2018

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Majority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Leader:

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JUN 12 2018

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Madam Leader:

Enclosed please find the Department of Justice (Department) Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) Annual Report on the Rafael Ramos and Wenjian Liu National Blue Alert Act to Congress (Pub. L. No. 114-12). Under the National Blue Alert Act, the Department is required to develop the national Blue Alert framework; determine and designate an Advisory Board; create voluntary guidelines for States; and identify and address the challenges facing States as they try to implement Blue Alert.

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JUN 12 2018

The Honorable Charles E. Grassley
Chairman
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Enclosed please find the Department of Justice (Department) Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) Annual Report on the Rafael Ramos and Wenjian Liu National Blue Alert Act to Congress (Pub. L. No. 114-12). Under the National Blue Alert Act, the Department is required to develop the national Blue Alert framework; determine and designate an Advisory Board; create voluntary guidelines for States; and identify and address the challenges facing States as they try to implement Blue Alert.

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JUN 12 2018

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Feinstein:

Enclosed please find the Department of Justice (Department) Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) Annual Report on the Rafael Ramos and Wenjian Liu National Blue Alert Act to Congress (Pub. L. No. 114-12). Under the National Blue Alert Act, the Department is required to develop the national Blue Alert framework; determine and designate an Advisory Board; create voluntary guidelines for States; and identify and address the challenges facing States as they try to implement Blue Alert.

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JUN 12 2018

The Honorable Robert W. Goodlatte
Chairman
Committee on the Judiciary
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

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Washington, D.C. 20530

JUN 12 2018

The Honorable Jerry Nadler
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Nadler:

Enclosed please find the Department of Justice (Department) Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) Annual Report on the Rafael Ramos and Wenjian Liu National Blue Alert Act to Congress (Pub. L. No. 114-12). Under the National Blue Alert Act, the Department is required to develop the national Blue Alert framework; determine and designate an Advisory Board; create voluntary guidelines for States; and identify and address the challenges facing States as they try to implement Blue Alert.

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**Rafael Ramos and Wenjian Liu National Blue
Alert Act**

REPORT TO CONGRESS

May 2018

**United States Department of Justice
Office of Community Oriented Policing Services**

Rafael Ramos and Wenjian Liu National Blue Alert Act

REPORT TO CONGRESS

United States Department of Justice

Office of Community Oriented Policing Services

I. Purpose

Pursuant to the Rafael Ramos and Wenjian Liu National Blue Alert Act of 2015, Pub. L. No. 114-12 (Blue Alert Act or Act), the United States Department of Justice (DOJ or Department) provides this annual report to Congress.

II. Background

The Blue Alert Act was enacted to “establish a national Blue Alert communications network within the [U.S.] Department of Justice to issue Blue Alerts through the initiation, facilitation, and promotion of Blue Alert plans, in coordination with States, units of local government, law enforcement agencies, and other appropriate entities.” (34 U.S.C. § 50502).” Named for two fallen New York City Police Department (NYPD) officers who were ambushed, the Act is intended to facilitate rapid dissemination of information to law enforcement agencies, the media, and the public that will aid in (1) apprehending violent criminals who have killed or seriously injured a law enforcement officer in the line of duty; (2) finding an officer when he or she is missing in connection with his or her official duties; or (3) sharing notice of an imminent and credible threat that an individual intends to cause the serious injury or death of a law enforcement officer.

Officer safety and wellness remains a top priority for the Department, which is committed to implementing the Blue Alert Act to protect the lives of the men and women who bravely serve in law enforcement. Attorney General Sessions has consistently recognized the uniquely dangerous nature of police work and reiterated the Department’s strong support of federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement. The Department assigned the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) with the honor of overseeing implementation of the Blue Alert Act and to create the National Blue Alert Network, based on its extensive work on officer safety and wellness issues.

III. Coordinator Activities

The Blue Alert Act requires an annual report to Congress on the activities of the National Blue Alert Coordinator and the effectiveness and status of Blue Alert plans that are in effect or being developed. The COPS Office dedicated significant time and effort to implement the Blue Alert Act and reports the following activities:

A. Designation of National Coordinator and Deputy National Coordinator. The Blue Alert Act requires the Attorney General to assign an existing officer of the Department to act as the national coordinator of the Blue Alert communications network to serve as the nationwide point of contact for the development of a network and regional coordination of Blue Alerts through the network (34 U.S.C. § 50503(a)).

As noted in previous Reports to Congress, the Attorney General designated the Director of the COPS Office as the National Blue Alert Coordinator (Coordinator). On April 13, 2018, Phillip E. Keith was appointed by Attorney General Sessions as the Director of the COPS Office. Director Keith has more than 47 years of experience in the fields of criminal justice, public safety, and business administration. Thirty-four of those years were spent in active law enforcement service, including 17 years as Chief of Police of the Knoxville, Tennessee, Police Department. In addition to his service as a law enforcement officer, Mr. Keith has significant policy and administrative experience, including working directly with the COPS Office.

The Coordinator designated an existing COPS Office staff member with significant law enforcement experience as the Deputy National Blue Alert Coordinator (Deputy Coordinator) to assist in implementing the Blue Alert Act. The Coordinator also established the COPS Office Blue Alert Team consisting of existing federal staff with a broad range of expertise.¹ This team meets regularly to discuss implementation strategies, timelines, and deliverables. Select members of the team have been trained to provide technical assistance to states and local law enforcement agencies seeking to establish Blue Alert plans or enhance an existing Blue Alert plan.

B. Establishment of Advisory Group and Quarterly Meetings. Pursuant to the Blue Alert Act, the Coordinator is required to establish an Advisory Group to assist states, local governments, and other involved entities with initiating, facilitating, and promoting Blue Alert plans (34 U.S.C. § 50503(b)(5)). The Act requires the group to have geographically diverse representation and include the following representatives:

- A law enforcement organization representing rank-and-file officers
- Other law enforcement agencies and public safety communications
- Broadcasters, first responders, dispatchers, and radio station personnel
- Other individuals and organizations the Coordinator determines are necessary for the success of the network

¹ Shanetta Y. Cutlar, Andrew Dorr, Robert Chapman, Vince Davenport, Shannon Long, Sheryl Thomas, Melissa Fieri-Fetrow, Tracie Johnson-Farrell, Girale Wilson-Takahashi, Lachundra Lindsey, Gerald Moore, and Matthew Lysakowski.

As previously reported, the Coordinator established an Advisory Group that satisfies each of the statutory requirements. Today, there are nine members representing the following organizations:

- Fraternal Order of Police (FOP)
- National Association of Police Organizations (NAPO)
- Blue Alert Foundation, Inc.
- International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP)
- National Sheriffs' Association (NSA)
- National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund (NLEOMF)
- Association of Public Safety Communications Officials (APCO)
- National Association of Broadcasters (NAB)
- First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet)

The Advisory Group meets on a quarterly basis and most recently met on March 28, 2018. To date, Advisory Group members have provided valuable individual feedback to the COPS Office on our guidance and recommendations to states and local governments in developing or enhancing their Blue Alert plans.

The COPS Office will add additional Advisory Group members or amend the frequency of meetings, as appropriate, consistent with the discretion granted to the Coordinator by the Blue Alert Act.

C. Development of Voluntary Guidelines and Protocols. The Blue Alert Act requires the Coordinator to establish voluntary guidelines for states and local governments to use in developing Blue Alert plans. The guidelines must include a list of resources necessary to establish Blue Alert plans; criteria and guidelines for issuing Blue Alerts; guidelines to protect privacy and civil liberties; and guidelines aligned with the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) database operated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and any other relevant crime information repository (34 U.S.C. § 50503).

The voluntary guidelines address two complementary yet separate components of the Blue Alert Act: public alerts and law enforcement sensitive (LES) alerts. Public alerts directed at media outlets and affected communities provide suspect or missing officer information that is appropriate for public dissemination. LES alerts directed at affected law enforcement agencies provide sensitive information that is accessible only to law enforcement personnel. Public and LES alerts are often sent concurrently.

Unlike public Blue Alerts, LES Blue Alerts are limited to situations when an investigating agency needs to share information with other states or law enforcement agencies but is not prepared to make suspect information publicly known. LES alerts are used when the investigating agency believes that making suspect information known publicly could jeopardize

the criminal investigation or when the investigating agencies believes that public alerting is not prudent given the facts known at the time. LES alerts are also used when there is a known credible threat to law enforcement in a particular jurisdiction and the investigating agency wishes to alert other law enforcement personnel in the affected jurisdictions or geographical area without making the threat known publicly.

To meet its statutory mandate to establish voluntary guidelines, the COPS Office issued *Alert Guidelines* (https://cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/blue-alert/blue_alert_guidelines.pdf) to provide general information on when a law enforcement agency should issue Blue Alerts consistent with the statutory criteria as set forth in the Blue Alert Act. Blue Alerts may be issued when one of the following sets of threshold criteria are met: (1) death or serious injury of a law enforcement officer in the line of duty; (2) law enforcement officer missing in connection with official duties; or (3) threat to cause death or serious injury to a law enforcement officer.

To supplement the *Alert Guidelines*, the COPS Office developed *Effective Blue Alert Plans: Guidance and Recommendations* to help states and local agencies through the development process of Blue Alert plans; enhance and standardize existing state and local Blue Alert plans; and promote nationwide compatibility of Blue Alert plans. This comprehensive guidance identifies and addresses eight key elements to consider in developing new or updating existing Blue Alert plans: (1) activation criteria for alerts; (2) requesting alerts; (3) writing effective alerts; (4) geographic scope of alerts; (5) interstate and intrastate coordination of alerts; (6) duration of alerts; (7) officer privacy protection; and (8) suspect apprehension efforts.

The COPS Office has worked closely with our partners at the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) to establish the most effective way to deliver targeted alerts within the existing alerting infrastructure. We will also continue to work with law enforcement stakeholders and Advisory Group members to increase the effectiveness of our guidance.

D. Information Repositories and Delivery of Technical Assistance. Since October 2016, the COPS Office has maintained a dedicated webpage on our DOJ website at <https://cops.usdoj.gov/bluealert> to promote Blue Alerts and provide educational materials. This National Blue Alert Network webpage serves as a centralized resource center to include, but not limited to, the following:

- Rafael Ramos and Wenjian Liu National Blue Alert Act of 2015
- Blue Alert map indicating those states and territories with Blue Alert plans
- Alert Guidelines
- National Blue Alert Network factsheet
- Blue Alert Legislation Compendium
- State Blue Alert Officials Directory (public contact information)

- Information on who is eligible and how to access our secure controlled access information sharing platform

Since January 2017, the COPS Office has maintained a secure web-based data repository maintained on the Federal Bureau of Investigation Law Enforcement Enterprise Portal (LEEP) that provides controlled access to states, local governments, law enforcement agencies, and other qualified stakeholders as determined by the Coordinator. Individuals with existing LEEP or LEO.gov accounts can access the National Blue Alert Network Special Interest Group (SIG) directly at https://leo.cjis.gov/leoContent/sigs/blue_alert/. The National Blue Alert SIG provides curated information that may not be appropriate for public dissemination to include, but not limited to, the following:

- State Blue Alert Officials Directory (24-Hour emergency contact information)
- National Blue Alert Network PowerPoint Presentation
- Effective Blue Alert Plans: Guidance and Recommendations
- Sample Blue Alert Policies
- Annual Reports to Congress

The COPS Office will continue to enhance the National Blue Alert Network webpage and SIG with updated and new information on a regular basis.

Notably, the Blue Alert Act prohibits the Coordinator from lobbying any state officer regarding the funding or implementation of a Blue Alert plan. However, the COPS Office offers free informational resources and technical assistance to any state or local agency wishing to establish or modify its Blue Alert plans. Upon request by the state or local agency, trained COPS Office Blue Alert Team members will review Blue Alert plans and provide feedback to ensure compliance with the voluntary guidelines and protocols.

E. Engagement with Stakeholders. As previously reported, the COPS Office reached out to several key stakeholders to assist in developing and implementing a national Blue Alert Act strategy.

The COPS Office continues to work with the Executive Director of the Blue Alert Foundation, Inc. to promote the creation and establishment of Blue Alert systems throughout the United States. The foundation also provides support to families of fallen officers and facilitates the acquisition of critical safety equipment for law enforcement agencies needing assistance. The Executive Director currently serves on the Blue Alert Advisory Group.

The COPS Office continues to work with FirstNet, an independent authority within the Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration. FirstNet's mission is to build, operate, and maintain the first high-speed nationwide wireless broadband network for interoperable public safety communications.

The Attorney General is statutorily designated as a member of the FirstNet Board. In 2013, then Attorney General, consistent with FirstNet bylaws, delegated his responsibilities to the COPS Office Director during the inaugural years of the Board. Currently, the Executive Assistant Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Science and Technology Branch serves as the Attorney General's designee on the Board.

In light of the similar equities between FirstNet and the Blue Alert Act, the COPS Office consulted with the now former President of FirstNet, whose expertise has been valuable in the development of the COPS Office's national Blue Alert Act strategy. The COPS Office anticipates that FirstNet, once it is fully operational, will be able to streamline communications interoperability for states, thus further facilitating nationwide Blue Alert coordination.

The COPS Office will continue to work with stakeholders individually and collectively to develop and enhance our national strategy for the Blue Alert Act. We will also identify additional stakeholders as needed.

F. Cooperation with Other Federal Agencies. The Act requires the Coordinator to cooperate with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Department of Transportation (DOT), and other DOJ offices as appropriate (34 U.S.C. § 50503(d)). As previously reported, the COPS Office established a point of contact with each of the identified federal agencies and the FBI. We have since forged strong working relationships with several key federal partners; notably, the FCC and FEMA.

The FCC oversees the national Emergency Alert System (EAS) used to deliver important emergency information, such as AMBER alerts and weather information targeted to specific areas. The FCC plays a key role in alerting as it establishes the technical standards, activation procedures, and testing protocols. The FCC has sole authority to create fixed three-letter EAS event codes used to define alerts and the corresponding actions by broadcasters, cable system operators, wireless carriers, and other parties responsible for alerting the public.

In tandem with the FCC's role in alerting, the DHS's FEMA is responsible for maintaining and operating the national Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS). In order to ensure that alerting capabilities keep up with current and emerging technologies, FEMA partners with various stakeholders from the public and private sectors representing broadcasting, mobile device manufacturers, and other interested industries.

States and many jurisdictions rely on IPAWS to utilize EAS and Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) to alert the public. IPAWS allows alerting authorities to write their own emergency alerts using commercially available software applications approved by FEMA and compliant with common alerting protocols. Alerts are authenticated and delivered simultaneously through multiple communication pathways to quickly reach the public.

The COPS Office will continue its ongoing coordination efforts with FEMA to advance the integration of Blue Alert Plans into IPAWS. The COPS Office will also continue to seek consultation with, and ongoing advice from, our federal partners. We will also identify new federal partners as needed.

G. Promotion of the Blue Alert Act. Notably, the Blue Alert statute prohibits the Coordinator from conducting any official travel or hosting a conference for the sole purpose of implementing the Blue Alert Act (34 U.S.C. § 50503(e)(3)). These restrictions have not prevented the COPS Office from promoting the Blue Alert Act, and we have undertaken a number of measures to raise awareness of the Blue Alert Act.

The Department promoted awareness of the Blue Alert Act at various national law enforcement conferences, including the International Association of Chiefs of Police, Major Cities Chiefs Association, and the National Sheriffs' Association. These conferences provide the potential outreach to promote the Blue Alert Act to tens of thousands of law enforcement officers and agencies.

The COPS Office will conduct targeted informational outreach to states and territories to raise awareness about the availability of free educational resources and technical assistance from the National Blue Alert Network. The COPS Office will also publish a dedicated article in its e-newsletter, *Community Policing Dispatch*, to describe Blue Alert development plans. This newsletter reaches more than 7,000 law enforcement professionals and stakeholders. The COPS Office will further promote the Blue Alert Act with all of its active award recipients, which consists of approximately 1,000 state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies.

IV. Effectiveness and Status of Blue Alert Plans

In addition to reporting on the activities of the Coordinator, the Blue Alert Act also requires the annual report to Congress to include the effectiveness and status of Blue Alert plans (34 U.S.C. § 50503(f)). The effectiveness of existing Blue Alert plans is difficult to gauge at this time due in part to the disconnected nature of plans from state to state. There is no evidence, as of yet, that any of the states with Blue Alert plans have conducted research around this question. The COPS Office has begun collecting data as it becomes available in order to evaluate the effectiveness of Blue Alert plans.

As previously reported, the COPS Office made direct outreach calls to each of the 56 states and territories. This includes the 29 states that operate Blue Alert systems as well as those 27 states and territories that currently do not have Blue Alert systems. The COPS Office's outreach enabled us to identify and establish Blue Alert points of contact across the country, which is a critical resource for law enforcement and the public as no such resource existed. The lack of such a resource affected jurisdictions' ability to communicate within states and across the country. Even in states with established Blue Alert plans, it was often difficult to identify important points of contact necessary for alert activation or interstate coordination.

Since implementation of the National Blue Alert Network, there have been numerous incidents where law enforcement officers were shot and killed, sparking a search for suspects. In response, the Deputy Coordinator contacted the affected state authorities to offer assistance and to ensure that neighboring states or jurisdictions were promptly notified and to facilitate interstate coordination.

As previously reported, the COPS Office also verified which states have Blue Alert plans and the extent to which the plans comply with the voluntary guidelines. We secured copies of Blue Alert plans and related materials such as program overviews, activation plans, legislation, and brochures from states that currently have Blue Alert plans.

To further our analysis of existing Blue Alert plans, the COPS Office publishes a legislation compendium containing the specific public laws, statutes, or executive orders that authorized and created Blue Alert systems. The following are highlights of the threshold activation criteria from those states. These highlights illustrate clear and significant differences between states, which could limit or complicate coordination efforts when a suspect flees, or is thought to have fled, to another jurisdiction.

- 54% (15 states) of plans contain provisions for officers missing in the line of duty.
- Five states allow for activation in cases where an officer is threatened with a deadly weapon but not actually injured.
- 61% (17 states) require sufficient descriptive information about a suspect to enlist the public's assistance.
- 54% (15 states) require a suspect vehicle description or license tag for activation.
- Only one state has an explicit requirement that activation will not compromise the investigation of the incident involved.

The following table is a quick reference of threshold activation criteria for the featured states as of April 2018.² The wide range of Blue Alert activation criteria among states highlights the need for uniform guidance and consistent protocols to enhance coordination and maximize interoperability from one state to another.

	AL	AZ	CA	CO	CT	DE	FL	GA	IL	IN	KS	KY	MD	ME	MI	MN	MS	MO	NC	ND	OH	OK	SC	SD	TN	TX	VA	WA
OFFICER STATUS																												
killed	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Attempted killing									•																			
Seriously bodily Injured	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Life threatening injury				•																								
Assaulted with deadly weapon		•	•		•		•														•			•				
Injured														•														
Missing	•				•		•	•		•		•	•					•	•	•	•		•	•	•		•	
Concerning circumstances	•				•		•			•									•		•							•
Last location known							•			•		•	•								•							
SUSPECT																												
Poses serious threat to public	•					•		•	•									•									•	•
Imminent threat to public or LE		•	•		•		•				•	•	•	•	•					•		•	•	•		•		
Sufficient description to enlist public	•				•	•		•	•			•	•	•				•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•
Vehicle description or tag		•	•		•		•			•	•	•	•	•					•	•		•	•			•		
OTHER																												
Alert may help avert further harm		•	•		•		•														•			•				
Alert may hasten apprehension		•	•		•		•			•											•			•				
Will not compromise investigation																												•
Criteria to ensure victim name																												•

The COPS Office is continuing to examine and document the differences and commonalities between existing Blue Alert processes. The policies compendium will include state Blue Alert policies, forms, brochures, and promotional material from Blue Alert states that will be useful to states and law enforcement agencies in developing or improving their own Blue Alert systems.

There are two know instances where Blue Alerts were issued during this reporting period.

- September 29, 2017 – Polk County, Georgia. Detective Kristen Hearne was shot and killed as she and another officer responded to reports of a stolen vehicle. Shortly after arriving on scene, Detective Hearne and another officer were ambushed by a man and woman. Detective

² Utah has a Blue Alert plan but is not listed in the table due to insufficient activation criteria.

Hearne died of her wounds and the second officer survived his gunshot wounds. One suspect was captured at the scene and the second suspect fled.

The Georgia Bureau of Investigation issued a Blue Alert for the second shooting suspect who was later identified as Seth Brandon Spangler. Spangler was captured several hours later in Cedartown, Georgia.

- November 23, 2017 – Fairfield, Texas. Texas Trooper Damon Allen was shot and killed while making a traffic stop south of Fairfield, Texas on Thanksgiving Day. Trooper Damon had made initial contact with the driver, identified as Dabrett Black, and was walking back to his cruiser, when Black stepped out of his vehicle and shot Trooper Allen with a rifle.

The Texas Department of Public Safety issued a Blue Alert. Black was located several hours later and taken into custody after exchanging shots with other law enforcement officers.

The COPS Office will continue to identify and address challenges in establishing and implementing Blue Alert plans and develop the necessary informational resources and technical assistance to assist states, local governments, and other involved entities with initiating, enhancing, and promoting Blue Alert plans.

V. Costs

There have been no funds appropriated for implementation of the Blue Alert Act. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimated annual implementation costs to be \$1M once fully operational (Congressional Budget Office Cost Estimate, S. 665 Rafael Ramos and Wenjian Liu National Blue Alert Act of 2015 (April 6, 2015)). Preliminary assessments — informed by operational and technical assistance costs of the AMBER Alert system administered by the Department's Office of Justice Programs (OJP), its partner the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, and its grantee Fox Valley Community College — generally support the CBO estimate.

Similar to the AMBER Alert system costs, the COPS Office anticipates funds needed for the Blue Alert Act will support development and assistance to the 27 States and territories that do not have Blue Alert plans as well as training, technical assistance, and coordination to the states that do have Blue Alert plans. The COPS Office continues to work diligently to implement the Blue Alert Act and to minimize any costs by aligning with existing resources.

VI. Summary of Activities and Projected Next Steps

The Department reported the following activities in its previous report to Congress:

- Developed a wide variety of Blue Alert informational resources including:
 - National Blue Alert Network factsheet and PowerPoint presentation
 - Compendium of state Blue Alert legislation and policies

- Directory of state Blue Alert officials
- Guidance and recommendations on developing or enhancing Blue Alert plans
- Launched the National Blue Alert Network SIG on the FBI LEEP platform at https://leo.cjis.gov/leoContent/sigs/blue_alert/
- Conducted quarterly Advisory Group meetings
- Conducted bi-weekly COPS Blue Alert Team meetings
- Coordinated with FCC to initiate creation of dedicated Blue Alert EAS event code
- Identified all 56 state and territorial IPAWS authorizing officials
- Coordinated with FEMA to integrate Blue Alert plans into IPAWS
- Visited the FEMA IPAWS lab and trained on alerting equipment and software including conducting test Blue Alerts
- Submitted application to DHS for MOA to access IPAWS-OPEN system
- Trained selected COPS Office Blue Alert Team members to provide technical assistance to states and local agencies
- Performed immediate outreach to states after officers were killed to offer assistance and facilitate interstate coordination.
- Promoted awareness of the Blue Alert Act at various national law enforcement events including the annual IACP conference and the National Officer Safety and Wellness Group forum

The Department reports the following new activities in this current report to Congress:

Thanks in large part to early interest and support from the Office of the Deputy Attorney General, the COPS Office organized a nationwide rollout of the National Blue Alert Network on May 19, 2017. Participants included Attorney General Sessions, members of the Blue Alert Advisory Group, Acting Associate Attorney General Jessie Panuccio, Federal Communication Commission (FCC) Chairman Ajit Pai and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Director Thomas Homan.

FCC Chairman Pai took the occasion to announce that he intended to put forth a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) in support of a dedicated Emergency Alert System (EAS) event code for Blue Alerts. On June 22, 2017, the FCC Commission voted 3-0 in favor of issuing an NPRM for the creation of a dedicated EAS event code for Blue Alerts. This was a very significant milestone in our effort to encourage and integrate Blue Alert plans nationwide.

In late November 2017, the FCC announced that it would hold a final vote on the Blue Alert EAS NPRM at its open meeting scheduled for December 14, 2017. On the day of the FCC vote, members of the Wenjian Liu and Rafael Ramos families, at the invitation of Chairman Pai to honor the two slain law enforcement officers for whom the National Blue Alert Act was named, were transported from New York City to the FCC Commission Meeting by NYPD Deputy Chief Thomas Burns and members of the The NYPD Employee Relations Section (ERS). The Section provides support and services to family members of officers killed in the line

of duty. Ramos and Liu family members delivered emotional remarks at the commission meeting prior to the vote.

The FCC Commission voted unanimously to approve the creation of a dedicated EAS event code for Blue Alerts. The FCC action gives alerting equipment manufacturers 12 months to incorporate the new Blue Alert EAS event code into new and existing alerting equipment and software. The FCC action also gives wireless alerting entities 18 months to make similar upgrades to cellphones and other wireless devices that are capable of receiving emergency alerts.

Other new activities include:

- Members of the COPS Office Blue Alert team monitored media reports and other sources to identify possible Blue Alert situations. When practical, team members contacted the affected law enforcement agency to verify facts and offer assistance if needed.
- Members of the COPS Office Blue Alert team met with officials at the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) to discuss lessons learned from the AMBER alert system. They also discussed the various ways that Blue Alerts could be pushed out to secondary alerting mechanisms.
- Members of the COPS Office Blue Alert team traveled to the Department of Transportation (DOT) headquarters to meet with officials from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The purpose of the meeting was to learn more about regulations governing changeable overhead message signs and how they could be used to display Blue Alerts. The COPS Office subsequently filed a formal request with the FHWA seeking approval to use overhead messaging signs to display Blue Alerts. The request is still pending.
- The COPS Office provided guidance materials and technical assistance to the State of Missouri in order to facilitate the implementation of a statewide Blue Alert plan. Missouri became the 28th state to adopt a Blue Alert plan when its law went into effect on August 28, 2017.
- The COPS Office provided guidance materials and technical assistance to the State of South Dakota in order to facilitate the implementation of a statewide Blue Alert plan. South Dakota became the 29th state to adopt a Blue Alert plan when its law went into effect on January 4, 2018.
- The Deputy National Coordinator traveled to the Nextstar Communications office to sit for an interview about Blue Alert. The interview was packaged along with comments from FCC Chairman Pai as a news story that was shared with television stations throughout the United States regarding the benefits of Blue Alerts.

- Members of the COPS Office Blue Alert team delivered comments about the National Blue Alert Network to the National Association of Police Organizations (NAPO). The comments were delivered at NAPO's annual conference in New York City.
- The Deputy National Coordinator traveled to Huntsville, Alabama to meet with officials from the Homeland Security Information Network. Most of the officials in attendance were fusion center directors from around the country. The purpose was to discuss ways in which information about credible threats to law enforcement could be quickly transmitted from one jurisdiction to another using existing fusion center infrastructure.
- Members of the COPS Office Blue Alert team presented information about the National Blue Alert Network at the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) annual conference in Philadelphia.
- Members of the COPS Office Blue Alert team attended a special meeting of the Global Justice Information Sharing Initiative (Global) in Alexandria, Virginia. Global held the meeting to discuss how current alerting activities (AMBER Alerts, Blue Alerts, and Silver Alerts) could be improved and integrated for the benefit of law enforcement and local alerting officials around the country.

This group is currently working on a promotional campaign for alerting stakeholders nationally and also examining the feasibility of developing an open-source alerting application that could be used by alerting officials at little or no cost.

The Department will undertake the following activities in the coming year:

- Conduct targeted informational outreach to states and territories to raise awareness about the availability of free educational resources and technical assistance
- Continue to work with the FCC, FEMA, and other federal partners to ensure effective coordination of Blue Alert rules and infrastructure.
- Further coordination with FCC to enhance the WEA effectiveness and to separate the FCC approved dedicated emergency alert code for Blue Alerts (BLU) from broader notification grouping.
- Coordinate with FEMA to conduct national call with state alerting officials to discuss how each is responding the new BLU EAS event code.
- Continue to work with law enforcement stakeholders and Advisory Group members to increase the effectiveness of our guidance and recommendations
- Continue to promote the Blue Alert Act to thousands of officers and agencies at upcoming law enforcement events
- Publish an article in the COPS Office e-newsletter about Blue Alert

- Identify fiscal needs for further implementation of the Blue Alert Act and make appropriate funding requests
- Promote the Blue Alert Act with all active COPS Office award recipients
- Continue with COPS Office Blue Alert Team meetings
- Continue with quarterly Blue Alert Act Advisory Group meetings

Attachments:

- State Map of Blue Alert plans
- Blue Alert Factsheet
- Blue Alert web page screen image
- Global Poster