



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

Police
Department

Audit of the UAPD Special Investigations Unit (2019-2022)

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I. Purpose of Audit

The purpose of this audit is to assess the capacity to manage the current investigative case load and coordinate with other UArizona departments, community mental health resources, and outside law enforcement agencies. UAPD detectives work to ensure timely, empathetic, effective responses and complete investigations. Cases assigned to detectives vary in scope; however, support for threat related investigations are prioritized.

II. Historical Configuration of the Investigations Unit

Prior to May 2019, all detectives were assigned to the Investigations Unit. The unit was comprised of:

- 5 Detectives
- 1 Sergeant
- 1 FBI JTTF Task Force detective

In January 2021, UAPD added a detective to the Counter Narcotic Alliance.

The Investigations Unit is responsible for investigative follow up, processing major crime scenes, issuing cases with Pima County Attorney's Office, grand jury testimony, and serving as liaisons with various UArizona departments, law enforcement agencies, victim services, and public service organizations.

III. Implementation and Demobilization of the Special Investigations Unit

In early 2019, UAPD wanted to develop a separate Investigative Unit focused on sexual assaults, domestic violence, mental health, and hate/bias issues. Despite the low number of these crimes, the department felt it was important to have specialized detectives trained to investigate these cases rather than being rotated amongst non-specialized detectives in the regular Investigations Unit. This dedicated unit would be called the Special Investigations Unit (SIU).

Conducting follow-up on cases was the primary function; however, SIU would also attend sexual assault and mental health meetings with other law enforcement agencies, victim advocates, UArizona Dean of Students Office, and community-based organizations. Additionally, SIU was assigned to handle the department's background investigations pertaining to new employee applicants.

The SIU was created by reassigning one detective from the regular Investigations Unit and the promotion of a sergeant to supervise SIU operations. This staffing configuration remained in place until February 2022 when the SIU detective was promoted to corporal and transferred to patrol. Due to low staffing affecting the entire department, the SIU detective position was left vacant, and the SIU sergeant handled the unit's workload.

In January 2023, the Investigations Unit sergeant was promoted to Lieutenant. With the continued staffing shortages and the fact that the SIU sergeant was not supervising anyone, the SIU sergeant was transferred to the Investigations Unit. This movement resulted in the discontinuation of the Special Investigations Unit.

IV. Special Investigations Unit: Case Load Review 2019-2022

The following is a summary of the cases assigned to each detective within the Special Investigations Unit between 2019-2022. The information reflects cases assigned to the detective as the primary investigator, the number of other cases they assisted with, and the number of background investigations they completed as the primary investigator.

Detective

Cases	2019	2020	2021
Assigned	16	22	12
Assisted	17	13	6
Backgrounds	4	2	4

Table 1 Cases, Detective

Sergeant #1

Cases	2019
Assigned	16
Assisted	10
Backgrounds	6

Table 2 Cases, Sergeant #1

Sergeant #2

Cases	2020	2021	2022
Assigned	4	5	1
Assisted	15	24	31
Backgrounds	2	3	9

Table 3 Cases, Sergeant #2

Sergeant #3 (Oct. – Dec. 2020)

Cases	2020
Assigned	4
Assisted	6
Backgrounds	5

Table 4 Cases, Sergeant #3

When SIU personnel were unavailable, cases were assigned to detectives in the Investigations Unit. The following is a summary of the average case load per detective of the Investigations unit between 2019-2022.

- 2019: 37 cases
- 2020: 21 cases
- 2021: 10 cases
- 2022: 10 cases

In February 2022, the SIU detective was promoted and was transferred to patrol. Most cases were assigned to the Investigations Unit that year with Sergeant #2 providing oversight of certain cases.

V. Special Investigations Unit: Auxiliary Assignments

In addition to conducting follow up on criminal investigations, SIU personnel were the primary points of contact for various law enforcement groups, campus resources, and preemployment background investigations. These groups included but were not limited to:

- Behavioral Intervention Team (BIT)
- Threat Assessment Management Team (TAMT)
- Southern Arizona Center Against Sexual Assault (SACASA)
- Pima County Domestic Violence Coalition
- Liaison with Tucson Police Mental Health Support Team (MHST)
- Emerge Center Against Domestic Abuse

Participation in these meetings provided our detectives with a wide spectrum of resources and the ability to mitigate issues. The discussions in BIT, TAMT, and MHST, were designed to garner support for individuals and provide help before issues grew into serious problems.

VI. Special Investigations Unit: Lessons Learned and Final Conclusion

Prior to SIU coming into existence, any cases requiring follow-up were assigned to the Investigations Unit. With UAPD being a small agency, each detective was a generalist and could be assigned any type of case. They also had the ability to be the various points of contacts for law enforcement groups, campus resources, and preemployment background investigations. Creating a unit of specialized detectives was a good concept; however, SIU still required the support of the regular Investigations Unit. The support came in the form of staffing coverage for vacations, military leave, parental leave, and absences due to training. The Investigations Unit also assisted SIU with crime scene processing and complex investigations involving multiple interviews and warrants.

When SIU was created, UAPD designated an on-call detective for both the Investigations Unit and SIU. Over time, this approach was difficult to sustain. With only one detective and a sergeant in SIU, the on-call rotation was not equitable when compared to the Investigations Unit. As a result, the practice of having on-call detectives in each unit was discontinued.

The overall concept of having a Special Investigations Unit was a progressive idea. UAPD sought to demonstrate to the university community that UAPD had highly trained detectives dedicated to sensitive investigations and that as an agency, we used a trauma-informed approach to our interaction with victims/survivors. However, UAPD did not experience a high volume of special investigations, and due to our current investigations staffing model, there was significant case “cross-over” between CIU and SIU. As investigative generalists, all UAPD detectives can investigate sexual assaults, domestic violence, mental health, and hate/bias issues with compassion and competence. The SIU concept simply wasn’t practical.