


# City of Alexandria, Virginia

## MEMORANDUM

DATE: JUNE 3, 2008

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: RECEIPT OF A GRANT AWARD FROM THE VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, LAW ENFORCEMENT TERRORISM PREVENTION PROGRAM

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**ISSUE:** Receipt of a grant award from the Virginia Department of Emergency Management, Law Enforcement Terrorism Prevention Program.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That City Council:

- (1) Authorize the acceptance of the grant award (due June 16, 2008), for \$163,962; and
- (2) Authorize the City Manager to execute the necessary documents that may be required.

**BACKGROUND:** A heightened threat from terrorist attacks has been present in the Washington Metropolitan Area since the attacks of September 11, 2001. The prevalence of high profile sites in and around Alexandria has caused the Police Department to be constantly vigilant, to protect our citizens and to improve preparedness for all types of emergencies. One of the devices acquired to respond to terrorist incidents is a tactical robot, which was purchased with federal funds in 2003. This robot, which can go places that are unsafe for police personnel, has also been useful in responding to hostage and barricade situations. In these circumstances, the robot can approach buildings, search building interiors, and go almost anywhere that is too dangerous for a uniformed officer to enter (if necessary, by opening doors or breaking windows). The robot is able to transmit information back to officers on the scene, using a wireless camera and built-in lights, and perform other tasks such as throwing a phone through a window so that police can communicate with a person holding a hostage.

**DISCUSSION:** Since 2003, significant advances have been made in robot technology. Robot hardware now has more complex maneuverability for negotiating obstacles and performing complicated operations with the grippers and other attachments. Software improvements provide the operator with greater flexibility to maneuver the robot, as well as additional information on how the robot is performing. Finally, the wireless transmission has been upgraded to give the robot greater range, increased ability to penetrate buildings and obstructions, and more secure transmissions. Having a robot available that incorporates these advances will greatly enhance the Police Department's ability to protect its officers and Alexandria residents.

On May 14, the Virginia Department of Emergency Management notified Alexandria (and two other Virginia jurisdictions) that it will provide them with federal Homeland Security funding to purchase an additional tactical robot to address potential terrorist threats and more traditional public safety incidents.

The ability to operate two robots simultaneously will allow broader entry, surveillance and incident analysis capabilities, and provide more protection for police officers and other emergency responders during hazardous and dangerous events. A second robot will provide redundancy in cases where one robot is made inoperable by terrain or obstacles prior to completing a mission.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** The grant award is \$163,962 in federal pass-through funds. The grant will cover the cost of the robot, controller, batteries, cables, and specialized attachments. This grant requires no match by the City.

**STAFF:**

David P. Baker, Chief of Police  
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