



News Release

Date: December 31, 2015

Headline: Loss of Seized Assets Funds a Threat to Community Safety

Contact: Officer Tim Aycok
Community Resource and Public Information Officer
704-841-6754
taycock@matthewsnc.gov

MATTHEWS -The U.S. Congress, through their approval of the Budget Act of 2015 (November) and the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2016 (December), have effectively eliminated much-needed crime-fighting resources for many local communities across the country, including here in the Charlotte region. Through their approval of these budgets, which resulted in the re-allocation of more than \$1.2 Billion dollars from the US Department of Justice, the safety of our communities have been greatly impacted.

“Most communities, like ours, receive shared seized asset funds resulting from the arrests of individuals involved in federal criminal enterprises, ranging from drug trafficking to human trafficking. Since 9-11 and the resulting national call for greater mutual cooperation among federal, state and local law enforcement, the number of state and local officers - like here in Matthews - working jointly with their federal partners has increased. The results have proven that change successful. From more seizures of large volumes of trafficked drugs, a significant reduction in the volume of illegal immigration resulting from these arrests, to the increased joint investigative abilities within our local communities, we have witnessed a continuous reduction in crime nationwide,” says Matthews Police Chief Rob Hunter.

The Town of Matthews has had officers assisting with federal task forces for more than 10 years. As a result of the significant number of arrests and cessations of numerous criminal enterprises, the assets gained and purchased by these offenders have been seized. Through the cooperative agreements with the Department of Justice, the Matthews Police Department has accepted close to \$400,000 during this time. Those monies have been used to purchase much-needed safety/investigative equipment and software, significant training opportunities, fitness equipment for the members of the department to support and promote their wellness, and most recently the purchase of body cameras to outfit the entire department.

“Many of these much-needed resources would not have been otherwise available without this federal support. And for those who want to relate these assets with the national scrutiny on the ‘militarization’ of police, the President’s Executive Order 13688 issued in May 2015 effectively prohibits the use of these funds for those purchases and the transfer of many military-designed equipment and vehicles to local law enforcement,” says Chief Hunter. “The reality is that these seizures will continue, though at a lesser volume as many local and state officers will be forced to abandon the joint federal task forces. Congress will simply find other ‘desired’ places to spend these funds, instead of supporting law enforcement within their own communities.”

Hunter adds, “If a citizen has questions or concerns about how these resources are used, they need just ask – all of our purchases are public record and I welcome the scrutiny. My charge is to protect the citizens and police officers of the Matthews community and it has been with these much needed and earned resources that this has been supported in the past. I just sincerely hope that Congress redresses their error in judgement and demonstrates their elected responsibility to ensure the safety of their citizens.”

If you have any questions please contact Officer Tim Aycock at 704-841-6754 or taycock@matthewsnc.gov.