

Maricopa County Sheriff's Office

Joe Arpaio, Sheriff



Date: September 5, 2007

SHERIFF ORDERS CHANDLER K-9 SERGEANT BOOKED INTO JAIL

Arpaio Will Not Deviate From Policy Concerning Animal Abuse/Neglect

(Phoenix, AZ) Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio today ordered his deputies to book into jail the Chandler Police Sergeant who left his police dog in his patrol vehicle for 12 hours. "Bandit" died on August 11th from heat prostration while confined to the back of the patrol vehicle.

Sgt. Thomas Lovejoy, Chandler's K-9 handler and trainer, was booked into jail.

"This was a difficult decision," says Arpaio. "I am certain Sgt. Lovejoy has suffered greatly from leaving his police dog in a sweltering car. I do not relish the idea of compounding his sadness. However, Lovejoy must be treated like anyone else in similar circumstances. I have a strict policy on animal abuse and neglect whereby offenders are booked into jail."

The Sheriff's Office was not notified of this incident until two days after the dog's death. By that time, the dog's remains were readied for cremation and the police vehicle cleaned. Once the Sheriff's Office determined that the location of Lovejoy's home was in a county island, Arpaio immediately sent out his animal crimes detectives to determine whether a criminal investigation should be opened.

Shortly after Bandit's death, Chandler Police publicly stated it would not conduct a criminal investigation into the accidental death of their own police dog, only an internal investigation.

The Sheriff's Office investigation took just over two weeks. In that time, detectives

News Release

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interviewed a number of Chandler Police officials and veterinarian personnel. They also examined cell phone records, training records and mobile data terminals to create an accurate timeline of events leading to the dog's death and to verify the witness's statements.

“Our investigation determined that Bandit's death was not an intentional act on Lovejoy's part,” Arpaio says, “but it was reckless and for that, Lovejoy must be charged.”

The Sheriff's investigation shows Bandit was in the patrol car from about 9AM to 10:10PM on August 11, 2007. During that time, Lovejoy was running errands for his children, napping for a brief time then later dining out with his wife. It was Lovejoy who discovered Bandit was dead when he went to his patrol car at 10:10PM for some equipment required for the next day's work assignment.

“How any dog owner could forget about a dog for 13 whole hours is the most puzzling and most troubling part of this case,” Arpaio said.

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