

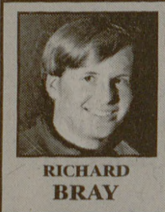
OPINION

THE BATTALION

Turn down that noise!

Joint noise task force targets students, wastes resources

In an effort to keep the community reasonably quiet, the College Station Police Department (CSPD) and the University Police Department (UPD) have decided to permanently continue the Loud Party and Alcohol Enforcement Task Force, a unit designed to issue citations to residents who have loud parties and disturb their neighbors. The task force consists of three teams, each composed of one CSPD officer and one UPD officer.



RICHARD BRAY

Although each officer in the task force has volunteered to work overtime, this unit is a waste of resources that could be used for more important endeavors. If the officers employed by CSPD and UPD are incapable of taking care of noise violations and related offenses during their normal working hours, perhaps the local police departments should hire officers capable of performing these duties.

According to a statement released by CSPD on Jan. 19, the task force "has proven its effectiveness." This statement is supported by the number of citations that were issued by the task force last semester: 212 citations for disorderly conduct, 605 for alcohol violations, 95 arrests and 23 warnings.

While the stats prove there are a number of noise violations occurring in the community, it does not demonstrate that the task force was successful. If the task force were truly successful, then there would be fewer noise violations occurring, and, over time, the problem would diminish. Instead of attempting to actually solve the problem by mediating the situation and building an understanding between the police and violators, the police point to the large numbers of citations they have given to prove the task force's success.

The College Station community does have residents who are not college students. These individuals deserve the right to sleep on the weekends and should not have to call the police to report noise violations. However, drunken college students do get out on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights, and, as a result, police must be called out on occasion to calm the situation and break up out of control parties. Does this really require a special task force?

CSPD and UPD are ignorant if they believe students are so unreasonable that they refuse to quiet down at a police officer's requests. While there are

occasional situations when individuals must be given citations, most of the time students are willing to comply with the police's requests.

If officers are able to simply disband the party and/or provide warnings, in most cases the issue can be settled quickly and without incident. However, in most cases over the past semester, the task force chose to issue citations rather than warnings as the law suggests as an alternative in normal situations. By issuing 212 citations and only 23 warnings, the task force boosted the numbers that were then used to support the program's continued existence.

In a *Battalion* article regarding the task force on Jan. 26, a University of Texas-Austin law professor was quoted as saying that selective enforcement of noise violations is unfair because a low number of warnings were issued. He said that issuing a citation without a warning is legal, but the law says there should be a reason for such action.

The CSPD release defended the task force by saying that "a decrease in loud-party complaints means that more police officers are available to handle other responsibilities, such as patrolling for burglars and responding to in-progress-type calls."

Perhaps a better solution would be to spend the money and manpower dedicated to the noise-level task force and apply them toward these other responsibilities. By concentrating their resources toward relatively minor crimes instead of larger community problems, CSPD and UPD are wasting the money of those who pay for their programs.

The College Station community has more serious crime to contend with than noisy parties. In the week the task force's future was announced, an A&M student reported being assaulted on the golf course while walking to his residence hall and a teenage girl told police she was sexually assaulted after a practice track meet at A&M Consolidated High School. These are the type of incidents, not noise violations, that should motivate police to work overtime.

With limited resources, CSPD and UPD must be careful when making decisions about how they can serve the community best. Students are being assaulted, but the police are concerning themselves with noise violations. They should rethink their priorities.

Richard Bray is a sophomore journalism major.



RUBEN DELUNA/THE BATTALION

A Grand Ol' Party

Inaugural ball funds could be better spent

The inauguration of the nation's 43rd president recently took place, and many people came from all over the world to witness and participate in the events and parties.



CHRIS BUSTA

Though there are no figures that depict the exact amount spent on the inauguration, the Bush team spent at least \$17,466,000 to spend on the inaugural event, according to a list of contributors published by the Bush campaign. Too much money was spent on the inauguration.

America does not need to spend millions of dollars on parties to welcome in a new president. It does need to find a solution to the problems of this country, not celebrate in the face of them. Washington, D.C. has a tremendous rate of poverty and homelessness. The people of this country should spend money to solve the problems of homelessness and poverty, not on parties.

The list of lavish inaugural events seems endless. The Black Tie & Boots Ball was held in an upscale hotel with 11,000 guests. Brisket, martinis and 60,000 jumbo shrimp were served. In addition to the Black Tie & Boots Ball, there were 10 other extravagant inaugural balls. Eleven separate galas waste money. The inauguration should welcome the new president, but with all the money spent on the events, it is more like the coming of a new king.

One might think that there could not be room for any more events, but there was room for one more — the inaugural parade, which consisted of more than 10,500 marchers representing 45 states. The parade lasted more than two and a half hours and ran through the District of Columbia, ending just past the White House.

These events were held in the city with the highest poverty rate in America, 19.3 percent. Ten thousand homeless people live in the District of Columbia alone. Many of them saw the extravagant, elegant events roll into the city while they tried to find a warm place to sleep for the evening. In Washington, D.C., nearly half the

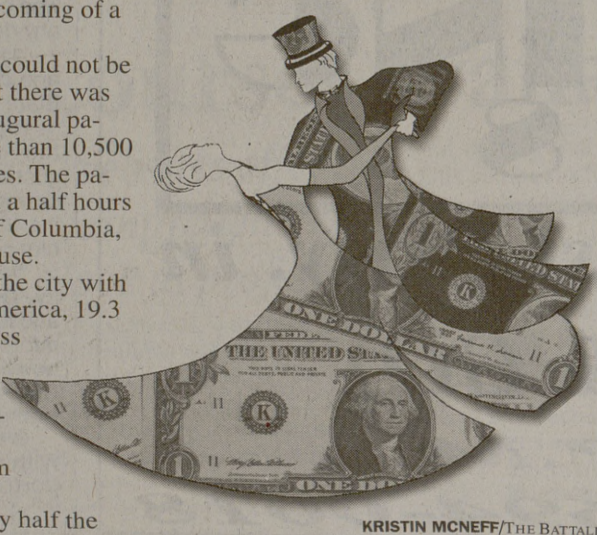
homeless adults have children. Try to imagine a homeless child asking his mother why they cannot live in a house or eat a hot meal or even take a daily shower. Now imagine that same child asking his mother the same questions while they watch limousine after limousine, carrying wealthy people on the way to fancy parties, roll past them. This inauguration should be considered an embarrassment to all who proudly call themselves Americans.

Instead of spending the money on a night of partying that will have no long-term benefits, Americans should have donated the money to organizations that strive to end homelessness and hunger. There are more than 40 nonprofit agencies that assist the homeless in Washington, D.C. Any one of them could have made a difference in the life of someone who needed help.

Future inaugurations should be less extravagant. There is no need to have 10 parties to ring in a new presidency. The money raised by the president-elect should fund one party, the parade and the actual inauguration.

The partygoers at the inauguration may have thought they were being patriotic, but getting an American off the streets is a much more patriotic and noble way to spend money.

Chris Busta is a senior agriculture and journalism major.



KRISTIN MCNEFF/THE BATTALION

Puff Daddy finally faces the music

Faced with possibly having to hang up his Versace attire for an orange jumpsuit, Sean "Puffy" Combs, also known as Puff Daddy, has landed himself with yet another run-in with authorities.



J.J. TREVINO

Combs is facing five criminal charges in conjunction with a shooting inside a New York nightclub late last year. Combs has adamantly denied the weapons and bribery charges filed against him, retaining dream-team attorney Johnnie Cochran to assist him. In a trial that began last week, Combs' high-profile lifestyle appears to be in danger as he anxiously awaits the verdict.

On the night of the incident, Combs and his girlfriend, Jennifer Lopez, were enjoying themselves at the club when another patron of the club insulted Combs by throwing money in his face. Angered, Combs and another rapper for the Bad Boy label, Jamal Barrow, drew weapons and fired several shots in the air, injuring three. As they fled the scene, Combs, Lopez, his bodyguard and his driver were pulled over by police. All were arrested for possession of a weapon that police found inside the vehicle. Several days later, investigators discovered yet another handgun they claim had been thrown out of the window during the frantic drive.

Success as CEO and founder of music label Bad Boy Entertainment has obviously influenced Combs' "above the law" thought process. Taking the label's name

literally, Combs is no stranger to courtrooms, attorney fees, and celebrity treatment. Indeed, Combs' past bad boy behavior has never landed him a day in jail, because he has somehow negotiated plea bargains for his violations. After pleading guilty to a charge of possession of a weapon and robbery in 1995, Combs was sentenced to a paltry \$1,000 fine, probably pocket change for him. Police reports released after this latest arrest reveal that, when booked, Combs was carrying more than \$8,000 in cash.

Only months before the shooting, Combs pleaded guilty to a second-degree harassment charge in connection with an alleged attack on record company executive Steve Stoute. Stoute produced a video featuring Combs that contained footage of Combs nailed to a cross. Combs had Stoute promise the footage would be removed, but he broke the promise and aired the video with the clip intact. Stoute's jaw and arm were broken in a subsequent attack. Combs was once again let off lightly, sentenced to attend an anger management class.

During his appearance before the grand jury that recently indicted him, Combs cited personal reasons for choosing not to own a gun. When Combs was three years old, his father was killed by gunfire and later, his best friend the Notorious B.I.G. was killed by a gun as well.

"I would never, never, never disrespect the life of my father or my best friend by owning or possessing a gun," Combs testified, no doubt with his fingers crossed underneath the table, hoping his previous guilty plea on an identical charge would not surface.

Nervous that he might not be able to rap his way out of this one, Combs was hit with another charge of bribing a witness. Prosecutor Matthew Bogdanos maintains that Combs put "relentless" pressure on the driver of the car by offering \$50,000 and a diamond ring to claim the weapon that was found. On three different occasions following the shooting, Combs allegedly left message on the driver's answering machine.

"I just wanna make you feel comfortable ... make your family feel comfortable," Combs said. Doing an unexpected U-turn, the driver went to police and later filed a \$3 million suit against Combs.

In what sounds like a desperate defense, Combs' lawyer said his client had no idea whose gun was in the vehicle, telling police that Combs has promised to find out who owned the gun. Combs just needs to make a few more phone calls and up the bribe a tad, and an owner of the gun will almost certainly appear at the station.

Combs has developed a pattern of violating the law and needs a severe punishment like jail time, instead of class time, to rectify his behavior. Although Combs has been known to say, "Ain't nobody gonna hold me down, I've got to keep on moving," it is now up to a jury to decide otherwise and convict the rap mogul. If he is found guilty, his jail cell might entice him to pursue a career in singing the "jail-time blues." Not to worry, a maximum 15-year sentence should give him plenty of time to perfect the sound.

J.J. Trevino is a senior journalism major.

Mail Call

Athletes deserve special treatment

In response to Matthew Cannon's Feb. 5 column.

First of all, let it be known that I am not a student athlete, but I do interact with them daily as a student athletic trainer. I came into this school as a regular student. I did not have a perfect SAT score.

For some, being a student athlete is the only way they would be able to pay their way through college. Otherwise, they may just end up working at a local fast food place.

Many students do not realize the amount of time that is put into being a collegiate athlete. Many times, they are up at 6 a.m. for morning weights and then off to class at 8 a.m. Then they have a morning full of classes before three hours of practice.

After that, they have to eat and then report back to study hall. A certain amount of hours of studying is required for each athlete, therefore academics are strongly enforced. Also, student athletes have to keep the same GPR as any student in order to stay in this University — a 2.0.

Then, they finally get a chance to go home and rest up for the next day ahead of them.

Early registration is necessary to ensure that all athletes can make scheduled practice times. Just like the student workers who get to register early around their work schedules, athletes are the same way, except their line of work is practice. Also, athletes are not allowed to park at the front door of Cain. It is only for staff and, yes, athletes do get ticketed.

Every student has access to Cain Hall if they want to pay for that meal plan just like at

Sbisa or the Commons. What about Duncan Dining Hall? It is strictly for Corps members and their dates and that is only during lunch. In the evening, it is just the Corps. Isn't that being unfair to regular students? What about being the same for everyone?

After reading this article, I was very disappointed in *The Battalion*. I cannot believe this article was allowed to be printed without proper research and with the amount of inappropriate comments it contained.

Christine Albright Class of '02