

*This segment originally aired on NBC5's Nightly News at 10 p.m. on January 8, 2012.*

**ANCHOR:** Tonight a Unit 5/Chicago Sun-Times exclusive. Cook County's Project Shield program was supposed to make everyone safer. Now an investigation by the federal government says the \$45 million program was ripe with faulty equipment, unaccountable inventory and missing records. It concludes, quote "Millions of tax dollars may have been wasted." NBC5's Political Editor Carol Marin has been reporting on Project Shield since 2008 and now has an exclusive new report.

**CAROL MARIN:** Those findings are included in this report obtained by NBC5 News and the Chicago Sun-Times. The Inspector General of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security conducted a six month probe of Project Shield and found it was wasteful and ineffective.

Project Shield, born out of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. In theory, video cameras placed in police squad cars and fixed mounted cameras on poles in 128 suburbs would have been able to beam back live pictures to a central command in case of a terrorist attack in Cook County. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security invested over \$45 million in that Cook County project.

In 2008 Cook County President Todd Stroger proudly showed off the new central command center and state of the art video equipped car.

**ANTONIO HYLTON:** This is what the President considers one of the most important initiatives for Cook County.

**CM:** But the Inspector General found many problems, including quote "equipment malfunctions, unused equipment and uncertainty on how to operate the equipment."

**REP. MIKE QUIGLEY:** We've already wasted that money for these years that we are less safe.

**CM:** In 2009 5<sup>th</sup> District Congressman Mike Quigley called for a federal investigation. Then Congressman and now Senator Mark Kirk joined in that request, complaining to Homeland Security Director Janet Napolitano that money had been completely wasted and the Department inattentive.

**SEN. MARK KIRK:** A Google search of DHS showing \$43 million wasted should come to your attention.

**CM:** Our Unit 5 investigation began in the summer of 2008 with documents obtained through the Freedom of Information Act and by talking to multiple sources. We showed how this pole-mounted camera in Franklin Park wasn't even hooked up. The IG found cameras "often targeted police parking lots, street and intersections with questionable Homeland Security benefits."

In Oak Park we found a monitor that couldn't produce a clear picture. The IG found "equipment was not working, was removed, and could not be properly operated." We found suburban police departments wanted no part of Project Shield. The IG found "32 never had equipment, 9 left the program," and at the end just "71 have vehicle video systems."

The IG found missing records, improper procurement practices, unallowable costs, and unaccountable inventory items. County Board President Toni Preckwinkle cut Project Shield last summer after its troubled seven year history.

**TONI PRECKWINKLE:** Project Shield was not working and it's time we went in a new direction.

**CM:** The FBI has investigated according to numerous sources but, to date, no federal action has been taken. The report says the Federal Emergency Management Agency did not

adequately ensure the State monitored how well Cook County spent the money. More tomorrow in the Chicago Sun-Times. Carol Marin, NBC5 News.

