

Police eyeing civilians for certain jobs

by UPI

WASHINGTON -- Some police departments in the United States are saving money by hiring civilians to respond to minor calls rather than sending sworn officers. The practice first came about in the 1980s but died after the economy improved and departments beefed up following the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, USA Today reported Monday. With the economy slowing again, some municipalities are returning to the practice. Among those using or planning to use civilians are the metropolitan police departments in Indianapolis and Las Vegas as well as the sheriff's office in Orange County, Fla. Sending civilians into the field even for routine calls remains a contentious issue. Jim Pasco, executive director of the Fraternal Order of Police, tells USA Today there is a "bright line" between what civilians can do and what sworn officers carrying a gun can do. "If it's a fender bender, there is no way of knowing whether the person involved is (fleeing) from a bank robbery or a drug deal or just taking the kids home," he said.

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