**Student’s name**

**Course id**

**Submitted to**

**Date**

**Baltimore Gun task force**

**What happened? Why did it happen?**

It comes to light one of the most severe cases of police corruption in the history of the United States, which includes fraud, extortion, false testimony, conspiracy. It stars in an elite unit that, using its plates, the agents took advantage of to commit all kinds of misdeeds with total impunity. Fraud, extortion, armed robbery, theft of firearms, illegal sale of weapons, false testimony, drug trafficking, conspiracy with drug traffickers, forgery of police reports and the murder in strange circumstances of a detective. This long list of crimes can serve as an argument for any North American Blockbuster. However, it is not fiction, it is one of the most severe cases of police corruption in the history of the United States, led by an elite unit of the Baltimore police, in which, using their license plates, the officers took advantage to commit all kinds of misdeeds with total impunity.

In one of the cities most affected by crime, poverty, inequality and racial tensions. The work of the Baltimore Police Gun Trace Task Force was to find illegal weapons and stop members of gangs that profited from drug trafficking. However, the reality is very different, and those who carry the plaque have turned out to be more dangerous than the criminals themselves. Of the nine members who were part of this unit, only one is a decent policeman. Among the remaining eight, six have pleaded guilty and have agreed to cooperate with the justice while the two remaining ones faced a trial and were found guilty before a jury. The federal lawsuit, which was held in Baltimore City, seemed on occasion a sort of upside-down world with the cops sitting in the dock and the criminals, some of them detained or extorted by the members of this group, giving testimony as witnesses under oath, theft of money and drugs. According to the statement on the dais of the detective Maurice Ward, who admitted his guilt before the start of the process, one of the favorite tactics of this group of corrupt policemen was to drive at full speed through the city, stop the car from braking next to a group of people and see who was running. At that moment, a chase began against his target which, once handcuffed, was interrogated by the unit's leader, Sergeant Jenkins. Then, Jenkins was identified (falsely) as a federal agent before the suspects. He took away their money and drugs and told them that he would let them go because they were not their primary objective. During the interrogations, Jenkins used to pose the same question to the suspects. "If you could gather a group of uncles and steal the biggest criminal in the city, who would that criminal be?" The respondent's response gave the corrupt police officers clues to their next target, which they sometimes tracked using illegal GPS trackers. False weapons to 'plant' the dead. One of the most common resources of this group of corrupt policemen to cover their backs in the face of a shooting that killed the suspect was carrying replicas of real pistol balls that would be used, according to Ward, "in case we shoot to someone accidentally or we were involved in a shooting, to be able to plant them ".However, during the trial, it was not clear if the police arrived to plant any of these false weapons on a suspect, although when their arrests occurred, several of the agents carried these false weapons with them.

One of the most spectacular moments of the trial was when Agent Ward told how the agents got hold of a suspect's house keys. They found his address looking in the Baltimore police database and entered his home without a warrant. Once inside, the cops opened the safe that had $ 200,000 inside. Then, they saved $ 100,000, put the other half inside the safe and recorded themselves pretending to open it for the first time. In the video, which was aired during the trial, Sergeant Jenkins can be heard ordering his men "not to touch anything." When the suspect, the owner of the house, was in preventive detention, he called his wife to tell him that the police had stolen the money and that he was going to get the services of a good lawyer to go after them. Jenkins learned of his intentions because he was listening to the phone calls and decided to anticipate the suspect's movements.

For this, the agents wrote a letter posing as a woman whom the suspect would have left pregnant in an extramarital affair. A version corroborated during the trial by the criminal that suffered the theft, in addition to the agents themselves — the declarations of the criminals. During the process, three criminals testified against the corrupt agents in exchange for immunity treatment with the prosecution. One of them, Sergio Somerville, declared how the police blocked his way to the exit of a complex of storage rooms in which he lived. One of the cops identified himself (falsely) as an agent of the DEA and lied to him saying that they had a court order. The agents did not even know Somerville's identity, but they went into his storage room and stole several hundred dollars from a sock. After robbing Somerville, the agents approached an employee of the storeroom complex and asked to see videos from the security cameras. The employee replied that this required a court order and the agents tried to intimidate him saying that he was "preventing a police investigation" and that "he looked like someone who needed to be robbed." Another of the criminals, Ronald Hamilton, convicted twice for conspiracy to traffic in drugs, stated that the agents took him out of his car and stole $ 3,400 when he went to buy blinds with his wife. A statement that was admitted by one of the cops prosecuted, agent Rayam, who pleaded guilty to the robbery. Hamilton stated that he had reformed and that he had made money selling cars, thanks to the rental and betting business. However, the defense lawyers (of the police) questioned his version of the facts stating that it was unlikely that someone who had left prison two years ago could buy a house valued at $ 500,000 by legal means. "This one here [about the corrupt police] has destroyed my whole family," he shouted. "Everyone's life has been destroyed because of her fault, I'm in a divorce process because of her, and my children are afraid to enter the house," he shouted. This is the story of just a small part of the misdeeds committed by this elite unit in Baltimore that has had dire consequences for the city's police department. The prosecution has withdrawn the charges and has been inhibited in 75% of the processes initiated by interventions of this group of agents. Also, the procedures related to personnel selection and control processes in the Baltimore police have been compromised since it has been discovered that agents such as Detective Jemell Rayam, who has pleaded guilty in this process, had been involved in the investigation. Facts that drew attention to internal issues such as stealing $ 11,000 from a driver during a traffic control or participating in three shootings in less than 20 months.

**Some measures that can be taken to prevent such incidents:**

* Increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the institutional trust control mechanisms.
* Develop internal and external mechanisms of police counterbalance.
* Deploy a new Comprehensive Police Development System in line with the best training and professionalization practices.
* Transform the system of security indicators to one oriented to results.
* Generate mechanisms for systematic evaluation of the performance and impact of public spending on funds dedicated to security.
* Strengthen the mechanisms for the generation and exploitation of police intelligence.
* Guarantee institutional learning capacities in ministerial failures.
* Generate incentives to guarantee the implementation of the Criminal Justice Reforms.