



HIGHLANDS COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Sheriff Paul Blackman

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'In God We Trust' being added to HCSO patrol vehicles

Branch of service decals also added for veterans

SEBRING -- The green and white patrol cars of the Highlands County Sheriff's Office are a familiar sight all over the county. So familiar, in fact, that they may not even rate a second glance a lot of the time.

But those who do take a second glance may notice something new in the coming weeks. Sheriff Paul Blackman has directed that "In God We Trust" be added to each of the marked units.

The decals will be on the back bumper of the cars, appropriately right next to the American flag decal. The phrase was adopted as the official motto of the United State in 1956.

"We had requests from several of our deputies as well as members of the community, so we thought it was important to do that," Blackman said.

The decals will be added to the cars in the coming days. The first was place Friday afternoon on a car that will be on display at the Highlands County Fair Feb. 10-18.

"As a pastor, I want to say thank you to Sheriff Blackman for putting that on the patrol cars," said Todd Patterson, pastor at Bible Fellowship Church in Sebring. "I don't know if I can put into words what it means to me, because God is everything to me. It's a blessing to know that we have men who will stand up for what's right. I also say thank you, as a father, to the sheriff for setting this kind of example in our community."

The phrase is not the only patriotic addition to patrol cars that Sheriff Blackman as instituted for the agency. Many of the patrol vehicles driven by veterans will also be sporting a decal acknowledge the deputy's branch of service.

There are 18 deputies on patrol who responded to the survey conducted by Capt. J.P. Fane, himself a veteran of the Navy and Air Force, asking about military service. There are six Marines, eight Army veterans, two National Guardsmen and one Air Force veterans who asked for the decals. HCSO records show 37 veterans employed in various capacities.

"We have a lot of veterans in our community and in our HCSO family and we wanted a way to honor them and our own veterans for their service," Major Mike Brown said.

John Nelson, head of the Highlands County Tea Party, said he was pleased about both decals. Nelson had questioned candidates about the addition of the motto to the patrol cars during campaign forums.

"We have ('In God We Trust') on the wall above the commissioners, it is only proper that we have it on our county sheriff vehicles, Nelson said. "It should not offend anyone. If you don't believe, fine; that is your choice in America, but I still believe that the small percentage who do not should not should be allowed to force others to their beliefs.

"I was also happy to hear that the sheriff's department is also recognizing those officers who served their country in the armed forces by putting an emblem on the cars recognizing the branch of service they were in."

The service branch decals have been applied, but the roll out of the other decals will be an ongoing process until the 100 or so decals are all on cars.



'In God We Trust' decals are being added to all of the Highlands County Sheriff's Office's marked patrol units. About 100 cars in total will get the decals.



Highlands County Sheriff's Office Fleet Maintenance Foreman Lance Yasenchak applies the first "In God We Trust" decal to a patrol car.



Veterans who drive marked units for the Highlands County Sheriff's Office now have their branch of service indicated on the rear window of their vehicles.