Gaming Division History

1993-2024

Strict criminal and regulatory enforcement and meticulous investigations are integral to successfully regulating legalized gambling. Because of its history of distinguished service and integrity, the Patrol was selected to partner with the Missouri Gaming Commission (MGC) to assist with investigative, regulatory, and criminal law enforcement services for the gaming industry.

On October 1, 1993, 19 members of the Patrol were assigned to the Division of Drug and Crime Control's (DDCC) newly created Riverboat Gaming Unit. This unit was created to begin conducting background investigations on companies and individuals applying for licensure in Missouri's gaming industry.

Once riverboats became operational, the need to incorporate enforcement personnel resulted in the creation of the Gaming Division (GD) on May 1, 1994. Created by order of Colonel Fred M. Mills, this was the first new division established within the Patrol since DDCC was created in 1983. Under the terms of a memorandum of understanding, the Patrol's GD works in concert with MGC to license and regulate constitutionally permitted gaming activities in the state. Officers assigned to the division conduct investigations and enforcement functions to assist with regulating legal gaming activities in Missouri. Industry proceeds entirely fund regulatory and criminal enforcement activities for the industry; therefore, MGC and, ultimately, the Patrol are reimbursed by the industry it is responsible for policing. The concept of the industry funding the regulatory body was incorporated into the initial architecture to ensure Missouri taxpayers did not bear costs associated with legalized gambling.

Chronological History

The below-listed officers are the original members assigned to the Riverboat Gaming Unit within the Division of Drug and Crime Control:

Lieutenant Roy L. Herren	Sergeant John R. Mooneyhan	Sergeant George Zorch
Sergeant Gary D. Dusenberg	Sergeant George C. Scott	Sergeant Robert E. Gartner
Sergeant James C. Meissert	Corporal Robert A. Mallery	Corporal Christopher N. Saulet
Corporal Steven R. Akridge	Corporal Randy L. Hoeflicker	Corporal Drexel W. McMahon
Corporal Willie J. Thomas	Corporal Terry L. Orr	Corporal Eric S. Wilhoit
Corporal Paul D. Cordia	Trooper Kenneth E. Swon	Trooper Jeffrey L. Smith
Trooper Lenn E. Alexander	Trooper Baron D. Lyons	

Shortly after being assigned to the unit, a group of officers attended a one-week basic gaming school at the Illinois State Police Academy in Springfield, IL. The school was created specifically to accommodate the Patrol's need for training on regulating riverboat gambling. The following week, the remaining officers attended the training.

On May 1, 1994, Lieutenant Dwight Hartung was promoted to captain and designated director of the newly created GD. Matt Brown was promoted to lieutenant and designated assistant director. There were 46 officers assigned to the division.

The Charitable Games “Bingo” Unit was established and included two Patrol members. This responsibility transitioned from the Department of Revenue to MGC, and both Patrol members worked with MGC to regulate charitable gaming operations throughout the state. Those personnel were tasked with regulatory compliance checks for nearly 1,000 licensed bingo establishments.

The Background Investigation Units were formed to conduct thorough and complex investigations of the riverboat gambling company applicants who aspired to be the first casino operators in Missouri. Initially, four background units were formed: two in the St. Louis region, one in Kansas City, and one in Jefferson City. In April 1994, MGC identified four of the 19 applicants as suitable for licensure in Missouri. The first two applicants were issued licenses one month after the background teams completed their investigations. The remaining two applicants were issued licenses the following month. The background teams bore great responsibility, setting the tone as they assessed the integrity of Missouri's first potential casino operators.

On May 27, 1994, Missouri's first two riverboats received gaming licenses. The President Riverboat Casino, aboard the historic Admiral, and St. Charles Riverfront Station were staffed with 13 Patrol personnel assigned as enforcement officers tasked with criminal and regulatory enforcement responsibility. The St. Charles Riverfront Station ultimately transitioned to the current Ameristar Casino-St. Charles.

On June 22, 1994, the third and fourth riverboats, Argosy-Riverside and St. Jo Frontier Casino, received gaming licenses. Nine Patrol personnel were assigned to those properties.

The fifth gaming license was issued to Harrah's-North Kansas City on September 22, 1994, and seven Patrol officers staffed this facility.

On April 27, 1995, Casino Aztar Caruthersville, now operating as Century Casino Caruthersville, became the sixth licensed Missouri casino. Seven members were assigned to the Aztar, which operated in the Missouri Bootheel.

On September 13, 1995, the seventh gaming license was issued to Sam's Town Casino in Kansas City. Sam's Town was initially staffed with eight members, but the company ultimately surrendered its gaming license on September 13, 1998. This site no longer operates as a casino.

Kansas City hosted the eighth casino licensee, the Flamingo Hilton, initially staffed with seven Patrol officers. This facility is now known as Bally’s Kansas City. The Flamingo's license was granted on October 18, 1996. On January 16, 1997, the ninth gaming license was issued to Kansas City Station Casino. Kansas City Station Casino was initially staffed with nine officers. It was later acquired by Boyd Gaming and operates as Ameristar Kansas City Casino.

On March 11, 1997, Harrah's and Players-Maryland Heights were each issued a gaming license. The two properties were collectively staffed with 19 Patrol officers. This unique situation occurred because both properties were two separate casino facilities co-located at a single docking site. Each casino featured separate gaming barges and floors with different themes and shared a common lobby. MGC decided that each gaming floor required a license; however, the two licenses ultimately were combined, and the facility now operates as a single casino entity known as Hollywood Casino St. Louis.

On July 25, 2001, Mark Twain Casino was granted a gaming license to operate in the City of LaGrange, MO, with seven assigned Patrol officers. Casino owners sold the LaGrange and St. Joseph casino facilities to Herbst Gaming of Las Vegas, NV, and today, they are part of Affinity Gaming.

On December 6, 2001, the Isle of Capri-Boonville was issued a gaming license and was staffed with five officers. It is now operated by Caesars Entertainment.

In 2003, a joint investigation with the FBI, the United States Attorney's Office, and GD members led to the arrest of a President Casino employee and an outside vendor who were involved with fraud, bid rigging, and stealing. The investigation revealed that the casino employee was paid over $230,000 for her part in a scam that defrauded the casino and the state out of many thousands of dollars.

On December 19, 2007, Missouri's 12th casino, Lumiere Place, opened in downtown St. Louis. Today, the property operates as Horseshoe St. Louis.

The passage of Proposition A by voters in the November 2008 election changed the face of gaming in Missouri by eliminating the $500 loss limit along with the ID requirement to gamble, raised the tax on casino-adjusted gross revenue by 1%, and capped the number of casinos in the state at 13. The impact of passage was felt in 2009 by the troopers assigned to the division due to increased criminal activity, especially trespassing by those who have voluntarily disassociated themselves from gaming, underage patrons, and barred persons. The provisions of Proposition A increased the potential for criminal activity, such as money laundering and fraud.

In 2009, gaming officers were issued TASER electronic control weapons, which proved to be an effective complement to other control methods used in the crowded casino environment.

With the anticipated opening of a new casino and an increase in background investigations, MGC sought and received legislative approval to increase the number of full-time employees in GD by 10 officers. Eight officers were deployed at the River City casino, and one each were assigned to the St. Louis and Kansas City background units. At the end of 2009, the authorized strength of GD totaled 120 FTEs (118 troopers and two civilians). That is quite an increase from the original complement of 46 officers.

A new training course was introduced to benefit troopers newly assigned to the division and MGC employees. An "MGC Overview Course", a six-hour program that

summarizes MGC and the Patrol's GD business. The objective was for the employees of each agency to understand how the small pieces fit together to form the big picture of state-regulated gaming. The Basic Gaming Agent Course was increased to 40 hours, including a POST-certified, 12-hour electronic gaming device training program developed by MGC Electronic Gaming Device Technicians.

GD officers opened an investigation into a multi-state credit card fraud scheme in March 2008 and continued through December 2009. Their work resulted in the indictment, arrest, and prosecution of eight suspects in eight states in federal and state courts. The known fraud was more than $250,000.

In March 2010, the River City Casino opened in south St. Louis County and briefly served as the state's 13th licensed casino. The President Casino closed in July of the same year. Additionally, 24-hour gaming was approved in 2010, and seven properties took advantage of the opportunity for increased revenue.

In December 2010, MGC passed Resolution 10-123, selecting Isle of Capri Casinos Incorporated as the priority applicant to build Missouri's 13th and last available Class B licensed gaming facility. On October 30, 2012, the Isle of Capri-Cape Girardeau was issued their license. Nine members of GD were assigned to the new casino. The property is now known as Century Casino Cape Girardeau.

GD command staff has grown from a director (captain) and one assistant director (lieutenant) to a director and four assistant directors. The division's current organizational structure features administrative services, an investigative unit, and two enforcement districts.

Administrative Services

The Administrative Services Section oversees division motor equipment/fleet management, training, property control (evidence), criminal records/case management, overtime, recruiting, personnel actions, and special projects. The section is also responsible for ensuring all evidence facilities at the 13 casinos are maintained within applicable Patrol standards. In addition, all documentation generated by enforcement members is processed and disseminated through the section.

Investigative Unit

The Investigative Unit conducts comprehensive background investigations of individuals, companies, and suppliers applying for licensure with MGC. It is responsible for overseeing and conducting investigations related to Missouri's licensed charitable gaming operations and is also charged with conducting background investigations on charitable gaming and riverboat supplier companies.

Background investigations are complex and reveal facts used to assess the overall suitability of individuals and companies to hold licenses granted by MGC. Casino companies are closely regulated, and this unit is responsible for conducting regularly scheduled relicensing investigations to reveal unethical or illegal activity. The

investigators are routinely tasked with conducting special investigations of casino companies, suppliers, and employees. All investigations serve to maintain the integrity of gaming in Missouri.

The Investigative Unit maintains Jefferson City, Kansas City, and St. Louis offices. Officers assigned frequently travel to destinations all over the U.S. and foreign countries. The gaming industry is a global endeavor that requires investigations to be conducted worldwide. Investigators routinely coordinate their efforts with police, court, and regulatory agencies in the various jurisdictions where travel occur. Each investigation is unique and presents varied challenges in obtaining the necessary information.

Charitable Games Section

The Charitable Games Section oversees licensed bingo operators and is tasked with conducting background investigations on charitable gaming and riverboat supplier companies, as well as licensed bingo suppliers/manufacturers. The officers assigned to this unit conduct regulatory and criminal investigations into complaints of impropriety of charitable games.

Enforcement Unit

Officers assigned to the Enforcement Unit enforce Missouri criminal statutes and MGC regulations on the 13 licensed casino properties. Officers assigned to the division's two enforcement units comprise most of the division’s officers and are responsible for a large and diverse amount of activity. Enforcement officers initiate criminal and regulatory investigations on the licensed properties. These officers routinely provide reports to MGC and federal and state prosecutors.

Additionally, officers assigned to the Enforcement Units provide an essential link with other Patrol divisions and outside criminal justice agencies. Law enforcement agencies often utilize information, intelligence, and evidence obtained by GD officers to assist with investigations outside the casino environment.

The Kansas City Regional Office of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Inspector General, presented certificates of appreciation to two GD officers for their role in uncovering an illegal prescription ring and the subsequent arrests. They opened the investigation in 2007 after a prescription pad was found on the floor at the now Bally’s Kansas City Casino. Investigation revealed that 26 prescriptions in the pad had been issued to 11 individuals. Some of the individuals received two or three prescriptions in a single day, nearly all of them for controlled substances. The Drug Enforcement Agency and the Missouri Board of Healing Arts joined their investigation. In 2011, four individuals pled guilty to several charges stemming from conduct discovered in this investigation.

To provide internal recognition, GD created the ACE Award to recognize the outstanding criminal investigations conducted by our officers. The inaugural ACE award was presented during the annual Missouri State Highway Patrol and Missouri Gaming

Commission luncheon on November 5, 2015, at MGC's Central Office in Jefferson City. Captain Christopher S. Jolly presented all the nominees with a newly minted GD challenge poker chip. All award recipients are presented with an acrylic trophy and have their names engraved upon a plaque displayed outside the captain’s office.

ACE Award Recipients

Trooper A. Keith Howery (2015)
Trooper Rebecca L. Eagan (2016)
Trooper Zachary A. Harrison (2017)
Sergeant William E. Oliver (2018)
Trooper Zachary A. Harrison (2019)
Corporal David R. Nelson (2020)
Corporal David R. Nelson (2021)
Sergeant Samuel V. Buchheit (2022)
Corporal Daniel D. Wohler (2023)

The Patrol presented Trooper Rebecca L. Eagan with a Valor Award and Corporal Jay A. Shirley with a Purple Heart at the annual awards banquet. They were recognized for their actions on May 20, 2016, when they contacted an armed suspect in a casino parking garage and exchanged gunfire.

The years 2014 through 2017 saw several enhancements to officer safety and capability. Each enforcement team received a portable fingerprint identification device to assist with suspect identification. The division began offering officers a gel-based pepper spray alternative to lessen contamination when the product was used in a crowded environment. Additionally, officers were assigned agency-issued cellular telephones to conduct Patrol business. Traditionally, gaming officers wore business attire while performing enforcement duties. This attire presented challenges, as they were not immediately recognizable as law enforcement officers. Their attire may have contributed to an increasing trend of incidents where force was required against non-compliant suspects. To address this concern, the division implemented policy changes that allowed the wear of external vest carriers to provide increased visual recognition as law enforcement officers and better options for carrying equipment. Equipment upgrades continued in 2017 when officers were equipped with duty rifles to improve their response capability to active threat situations. Additionally, the division began incorporating training on active threat scenarios as part of the annual training curriculum.

Corporal Zachary A. Harrison accepted the Patrol’s 2019 Benjamin Oliver Booth Officer of The Year Award. The award was given in recognition of investigations that identified over 30 suspects. The charges included sexual abuse of a child, distribution of controlled substances, and money laundering.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, all casinos in Missouri were closed for business from March 16, 2020, through the end of May 2020. The properties in St. Louis County remained closed until mid-June. During the closure, officers were temporarily reassigned to road duty, DDCC, and administrative functions.

The law enforcement profession's recruiting and retention challenges began affecting GD shortly after 2020. Division staff examined options and developed a response plan to meet the emerging challenge. This response required changes to the original enforcement staffing model that had been standard since the inception of legalized gambling in the state. The changes began in the Kansas City Metropolitan area, and by 2024, similar changes started in the St. Louis Metropolitan area. Overtime projects initially provided necessary coverage for staffing shortages and continued to be used to fill schedule gaps whenever possible. Operational necessity dictated that the four Kansas City Metropolitan area properties transition to a personnel-sharing model. As staffing numbers continued to drop in the Kansas City region, the personnel-sharing model shifted to a mobile enforcement team concept. These steps followed an approved long-range plan of controlled evolution developed in response to predicted obstacles with staffing. The rural properties continued to use the original staffing model of dedicated personnel permanently assigned to a specific property.

Gaming Division Directors

Capt. Andrew O. Tourney – October 1, 2022, to present
Capt. Larry W. Plunkett Jr. – January 1, 2017, to September 1, 2022
Capt. Christopher S. Jolly – March 1, 2015, to January 1, 2017
Capt. Norman A. Murphy – November 1, 2013, to March 1, 2015
Capt. Kevin A. Geiger – January 25, 2011, to November 1, 2013
Capt. Lester D. Elder – September 1, 2006, to January 25, 2011
Capt. Robert E. Bloomberg – February 2, 2000, to September 1, 2006
Capt. James C. Meissert – February 1, 1999, to January 10, 2000
Capt. Lawrence L. Buschjost ─ February 1, 1998, to February 1, 1999
Capt. E. Dwight Hartung – May 1, 1994, to February 1, 1998