

# BRPD ends ShotSpotter technology use

Sensor that alerted police of gunshots cost \$400K a year

BY AIDAN McCAHILL  
Staff writer

In Baton Rouge Police Department's first major belt-tightening measure in 2025, Police Chief Thomas Morse Jr. said he's ending

a \$400,000 annual contract with a company that's provided the city for 18 years with sensor technology that automatically alerts police when and where gunshots are fired.

When ShotSpotter's acoustic sensors detect a gunshot, the sound is fed through a computer algorithm that determines the approximate location. The technology has given parish law enforcement valuable assistance locating forensic evi-

dence like shell casings, which can help identify suspects' weapons, District Attorney Hillar Moore said.

In December, for example, 42% of the 470 gunshots reported in Baton Rouge were detected by ShotSpotter, a portion on par with most months since city police started using it in 2007, according to data supplied to The Advocate by the District Attorney's Office.

"The ShotSpotter technology is

good, but it's limited," Morse said, explaining his decision to stop using it. "It's bringing us to an area where a gunshot happened and that's it."

When the Baton Rouge police chief faced the challenge of slashing nearly \$9 million from the department's budget because a parishwide 2% sales tax — revenue totaling about \$50 million annually — is being transferred to the new city of St. George on July

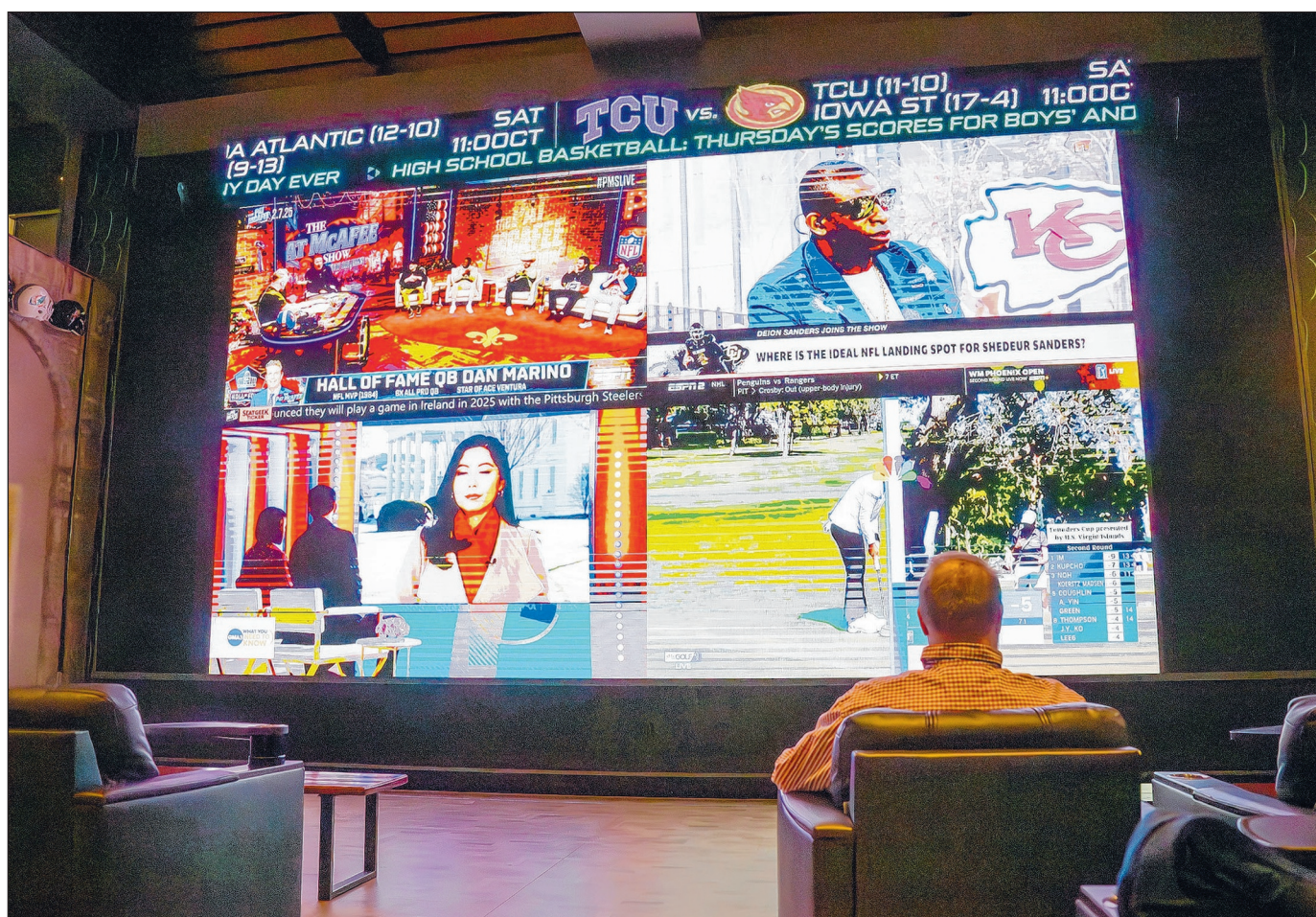
1, he opted to kill ShotSpotter.

For Morse, the technology's increasing cost simply didn't outweigh its benefits. He said as crime hot spots have shifted over the years, ShotSpotter's success rate has waned. Presently, the sensors only cover six of Baton Rouge's 80 square miles, plus two additional areas outside the city in the parish. Relocating the sensors would

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## 'THIS WEEKEND LOOKS REALLY GOOD'

Super Bowl in New Orleans means full hotels in Baton Rouge



STAFF PHOTO BY MICHAEL JOHNSON

The ESPN Bet sportsbook at L'Auberge Casino & Hotel gives patrons a relaxing spot to enjoy the big game. All of the facility's hotel rooms are occupied for Super Bowl weekend.

BY TIMOTHY BOONE  
Business editor

Baton Rouge may be more than an hour away from where Super Bowl LIX is being held, but the impact of the big game is being felt locally.

Jill Kidder, president and CEO of Visit Baton Rouge, said many of the full service hotels in the metro area are "really booked up" for the weekend.

Of the hotels that had rooms available during the middle of the week, rates were eye-popping. The few rooms in midpriced hotels such as the Home2 Suites in Gonzales, the Courtyard by Marriott Downtown and the Hilton Garden Inn by Baton Rouge Metro Airport were all going for \$400 or more a night, according to Hotels.com.

"From anecdotal evidence we're hearing from hoteliers, this weekend looks

really good," Kidder said.

Conservative estimates from Diego Bufquin, a professor at Tulane's Freeman School of Business, project the big game will pump \$150 million into the New Orleans economy. Kidder and Laura Cating, a spokesperson for Visit Baton Rouge, said the game will have an impact on the Baton Rouge economy similar to what you would see in an early season LSU football game — like when the Tigers host Nicholls State.

The muted impact is due to the fact that the people who are staying in Baton Rouge for the Super Bowl are here because they couldn't get a hotel room in or near New Orleans. So they are spending most of their time in New Orleans and sleeping in Baton Rouge, Kidder said.

"This won't be quite the same as a big LSU weekend or when Garth Brooks was in Tiger Stadium," she said.

Despite the limited impact, tourism officials have done their best to capitalize on having the Super Bowl nearby. A \$10,000 digital marketing campaign was created in advance and set into place after the Kansas City Chiefs and Philadelphia Eagles won their respective conference championship games nearly two weeks ago to earn a trip to the big game.

After the Chiefs and Eagles won, targeted digital ads promoting Baton Rouge tourism started running in the Kansas City and Philadelphia markets. After all, while business leaders and celebrities were going to the Super Bowl no matter what, the average Chiefs and Eagles fan decided to head to New Orleans once they knew their team was playing.

"We were perfect for this kind of overflow," Kidder said.

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## Experts weigh in on class remarks

Suspended LSU law professor's words draw rebukes, defenders

BY ALYSE PFEIL  
Staff writer

LSU's decision to suspend professor Ken Levy, who used vulgar language to criticize Gov. Jeff Landry and President Donald Trump during a lecture, has roiled the law school and launched a high-profile legal battle.

At the heart of the controversy is a debate: Were Levy's comments part of his right to free speech and academic freedom, the kind of intellectual discussion that tenure is meant to protect? Or were they demeaning and threatening to students, the kind of speech that the university can discipline in the name of maintaining a professional and safe learning environment?

"The big question here is whether the comments made in class are actually protected speech or whether it's subject to discipline," said Robert Noel, a political-science professor who teaches constitutional law at the University of Louisiana at Monroe and runs a criminal-defense practice.

Levy, a tenured LSU law professor, contends his statements were the former.

"Professor Levy engaged his students in robust debate, challenged their viewpoints, and expressed his opinion — clearly protected rights of speech and academic freedom," his attorney, Jill Craft, argued in a lawsuit filed last month.

Craft and other supporters of Levy have questioned if his suspension is part of a larger trend of Landry publicly attacking professors who criticize him.

"If the governor got his feelings hurt, well then he needs to not run for political office," Craft said on Friday.

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## Judge to halt leave for USAID workers

Plan to pull 2,200 off the job temporarily blocked

BY ELLEN KNICKMEYER  
and MICHAEL KUNZELMAN  
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A federal judge on Friday dealt President Donald Trump and billionaire ally Elon Musk their first big setback in their dismantling of the U.S. Agency for International Development, saying he will order a tempo-

rary halt to plans to pull thousands of agency staffers off the job.

U.S. District Judge Carl Nichols, who was nominated by Trump, sided with two federal employee associations in agreeing to a pause in plans to put 2,200 employees on paid leave as of midnight Friday. Nichols stressed his order was not a decision on the employees' request to roll back the ad-

ministration's swiftly moving destruction of the agency.

"CLOSE IT DOWN," Trump said on social media of USAID before the judge's ruling.

The American Foreign Service Association and the American Federation of Government Employees argue that Trump lacks the authority to shut down the six-decade-old aid agency without

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The sign and logo have been removed from the wall outside of the U.S. Agency for International Development headquarters in Washington.

ASSOCIATED PRESS PHOTO

