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## **Economy & Efficiency Commission Presentation**

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*Editorial Note: Although every effort has been made to insure the accuracy of the material in this presentation, the scope of the material covered and the discussions undertaken lends itself to the possibility of minor transcription misinterpretations.*

### **PRESENTATION BY**

**A Panel Discussion led by Supervisor Don Knabe including:**

**Chief Sandra S. Hutchens, Office of Homeland Security, Sheriff's Department**

**Chief Gary Lockhart, Chief Deputy Business Operations, Fire Department**

**Ms. Constance Perett, Administrator, Office of Emergency Management**

**Ms. Sally Thomas, Esq., Head Deputy District Attorney, Organized Crime Division**

**Ms. Kris Carter, Supervising Investigator, District Attorney (JTTF)**

*Topic: Homeland Security in Los Angeles County*

**November 3, 2005**

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Chairman Philibosian introduced each of the panel members and welcomed them to the Commission.

Supervisor Don Knabe initiated the panel presentation by noting the consolidation of various federal agencies under the new Department of Homeland Security. He then discussed at length his role on the National Homeland Security Advisory Council (NHSAC).

### **NATIONAL HOMELAND SECURITY ADVISORY COUNCIL (NHSAC)**

NHSAC has created a national response model based on "inter-operability", meaning that all agencies use the same terminology as well as compatible equipment and methods. Many of the preparedness strategies and methods utilized by local agencies within Los Angeles County have been used as a basis for this new national model. Former Secretary Ridge of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) was impressed by the mutual aid agreements, and the Emergency Operations Center, among other things.

When it comes to emergency preparedness County agencies have been working and training together in crisis response for decades with such things as a bio-terrorism drill being staged a decade prior to 9/11. It is the policy of Los Angeles County not to wait for federal assistance, be it reimbursement or possible FEMA response

### **Emergency Operations Center**

The County Emergency Operations Center (EOC), which can withstand up to a 8.3 earthquake, can communicate with all 88 cities and with federal and state agencies. On the morning of 9/11, Supervisor Burke and Supervisor Knabe were in the EOC which become operational within 2 to 3 hours of that disaster. After the recent train wreck in Glendale, the EOC enabled the Sheriff, Fire, and others to provide a coordinated response. With an infrastructure like the EOC, tested in actual disasters, County agencies will be able to effectively communicate during any homeland security incident. Supervisor Knabe then introduced

Chief Hutchens.

## **SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT**

Chief Sandra S. Hutchens stated that preparations were well underway to respond to the threat of terrorism before 9/11. The Sheriff's Department had developed the Terrorism Early Warning Group which brings together different disciplines, including law enforcement, health practitioners, and fire officials. The history of cross-agency teamwork is unusual from a national perspective but natural and traditional here. This Group gathers information and leads, as well as monitoring world-wide trends. Additionally, Sheriff Baca and Chief Hutchens attend executive meetings of the Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) which includes members from the FBI and LAPD.

The County is developing the Joint Regional Intelligence Center to be staffed by personnel from: LAPD, Sheriff, FBI, California Department of Justice, and the Attorney General's Office. It will evaluate intelligence not only from Los Angeles County, but will also look at national and world events and trends to consider the impact on Los Angeles County.

The Sheriff has also formed the Muslim American Homeland Security Congress, made up of a variety of Muslims in the Los Angeles County area who were concerned about a backlash against Muslim-Americans.

Supervisor Knabe thanked Chief Hutchens and introduced Chief Lockhart.

## **FIRE DEPARTMENT**

Chief Gary Lockhart noted that in contrast to law enforcement's efforts at prevention, fire department training emphasizes putting people and equipment in place to handle the consequences of events, whether natural or manmade. Resources available for this "consequence management" include: the paramedic service, fire protection, and urban search and rescue. Hazardous Materials (HazMat) teams have been trained to deal with HazMat releases from weapons of mass destruction, chemicals, ecological elements, and nuclear radiation. These teams are now equipped with terrorism kits which include escape masks, and equipment to detect radiation. Mobile Response Vehicles (MRVs) have been equipped with injections for treating exposure to chemicals and nerve agents and suits to replace contaminated clothing.

## **The Emergency Incident Command System**

The Emergency Incident Command System is being utilized not only for large scale emergencies, but for smaller ones such as a house fires. Its expandability makes it very effective and it is an example of a local initiative that is the basis of a new national model. Chief Lockhart stressed that it is not only a matter of equipment and resources, but also the standardization of communications. The Fire Department has budgeted \$40 million for hand-held radios, handy talkies, and mobile radios, as well as the hardware for other transmitting stations. Information is being shared with the Sheriff's Department and the Internal Services Department.

Supervisor Knabe noted that microwave trucks are available throughout the county which can utilize satellite signals, if necessary. He also praised those first responders from the County who were involved in the Katrina emergency relief efforts. He then introduced Ms. Sally Thomas, Esq.

## **DISTRICT ATTORNEY**

Ms. Sally Thomas commented that while the responsibility for terrorism was already written into the Los Angeles District Attorney's Office mission statement, the events of 9/11 clearly changed the mandate to law enforcement to require better coordination among jurisdictions. As a result, the District Attorney's Office has improved communication with the U.S. Attorney's Office, particularly in terrorism cases.

One example of this coordinated response can be found in the case of two suspects arrested by Torrance police for gas station robberies. After finding items that raised terrorism concerns, they notified their

terrorism liaison, who notified the JTTF. Ms. Thomas was able to file a case that day. Working with the U.S. Attorney's Office, indictments were issued and the individuals were turned over to them for federal prosecution. Ms. Thomas then introduced District Attorney Supervising Investigator Kris Carter.

### **Joint Terrorism Task Force**

Ms. Carter has been on the JTTF for three years. Over this time, the DA's Office has begun to focus on crimes that may result in funds for terrorism here and abroad. For example, individuals in Downtown Los Angeles who are engaged in previously ignored areas that can contribute to terrorist funding, such as counterfeit merchandise and counterfeit DVDs, are being investigated and prosecuted. Ms. Carter noted that federal statutes are often inadequate to prosecute some individuals, but state charges can often be filed. This strategy has resulted in the seizure of several million dollars. There are currently twelve County investigators (two supervisors, and ten investigators) working with the FBI on the JTTF.

Supervisor Knabe then introduced Ms. Constance Perett.

### **OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

The Office of Emergency Management (OEM), as part of the Chief Administrative Office, is tasked with the coordination of emergency planning and public education in what is known as the County Operational Area (COA). The OEM works with the 88 cities and unincorporated areas through their Emergency Management Information System. This system enables the rapid gathering of information on damage assessments and resource requests. The OEM has become a world wide model.

Recent County emergency preparedness exercises have included: Plague (2001), radiological attack (2002), explosions at multiple large venues (2003), and a dirty bomb (2004). This year's exercises are based on an Anthrax scenario. This year, 36 different exercises are planned.

The National Incident Management System, which is based on California's standardized Emergency Management System, is already being integrated into the OEM system.

### **Comments and Questions**

Commissioner Parks asked about law enforcement mutual aid. Chief Hutchens commented that mutual aid agreements are set up in such a way that resources are called for from within the county first before going outside the county. During the 1992 riots, when resources from nearby jurisdictions were over-extended, officers from Northern California cities were brought in under mutual aid agreements.

Commissioner Parks followed up with an inquiry on how homeland security funds are used. Chief Hutchens commented that homeland security money doesn't pay for personnel with the exception of some overtime and training. Every time she talks to someone from the federal government who asks for ideas on what would help, she comments that providing money for personnel is the key. The current emphasis on homeland security means personnel are pulled from other missions since personnel funding isn't provided.

Supervisor Knabe commented that from the very beginning, various jurisdictions have pressed for money to fund personnel. As part of the negotiation overtime funding was obtained, however, the bulk of homeland security funding is for equipment.

Commissioner Cole asked Ms. Perett how many community presentations the Office of Emergency Management does in a year. Ms. Perett responded that since Hurricane Katrina, her office has been inundated with requests for presentations. Absent a triggering event, the office does about one community presentation a week. The presentation materials are available on the website and available to other jurisdictions.

Commissioner Petak commented that the Department of Public Works is also vital to emergency preparedness plans. He inquired as to whether there are plans in place for mass evacuation in the event of a

major disaster like the hurricane in New Orleans. Ms. Perett responded that the County does have an evacuation plan and that the Sheriff's Department is responsible for coordination and movement. Chief Hutchens pointed out that Public Works and the Highway Patrol are key players in the evacuation plan. Unlike some other places in the country, innumerable transportation routes make evacuation from this area easier than what was witnessed around New Orleans. One area that is of great concern to her is the Port. Due to congestion on the 710 freeway, it would be very difficult to evacuate. Her office is looking at that issue and is considering things like reversing the flow of traffic on the freeway in an evacuation situation.

Supervisor Knabe mentioned that there have been a number of applications for homeland security grants: to prepare for using the Fairgrounds as an evacuation area, to train dock workers as first responders, etc. These incident response plans, in concert with evacuation plans, are in process.

Commissioner Oakes wondered whether any lessons were learned during the recent blackout that happened on a day when a terror alert for the city of Los Angeles had been publicized. Supervisor Knabe observed that the chain of command for communication at the utility was not adequate.

Commissioner Baltierrez commented that the health care aspect of emergency preparedness is her key concern. With regard to the avian flu, she wondered whether there is a plan of action besides warnings in the press. Supervisor Knabe responded that there is a plan in progress to coordinate the health care assets of the county.

Commissioner Padilla asked what lessons have been learned from the Katrina response especially regarding the role of the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA). Additionally, he queried the panel about communication amongst first-responders rather than the dispatch model of communication. Chief Hutchens acknowledged the \$20 million for inter-operable communications equipment that was given by the Board. She pointed out that at present, 50 agencies can have their communications routed through the Sheriff's communications center in an emergency. She went on to comment that inter-operability is far more than compatible equipment; it also includes inter-operability of terms, data, etc. In regards to the role of FEMA, she commented that it is limited to writing the check at the end of an incident, not to be first responders.

Supervisor Knabe reiterated Chief Hutchens's point about FEMA while emphasizing the necessity of having a plan in place. Regarding Katrina, he commented that the mayor of New Orleans shouldn't have expected FEMA to be a first responder. Additionally, he felt that although they had a plan, simple things like moving evacuation vehicles to higher ground were overlooked. In contrast, Los Angeles County resources train extensively to respond to various scenarios.

Commissioner Petak commented about a move in Congress to allow the use of federal troops in response to an emergency situation in spite of the fact that the Posse Comitatus forbids the use of federal troops without a request from the state. He asked Supervisor Knabe about his position on this issue. Supervisor Knabe said that the key to success utilizing outside resources is coordination. As long as the local responders who know the area and are already executing a plan coordinate with federal troops, he doesn't consider their presence a problem.

Another guest asked what the impact is of "just a threat" since even a phony threat creates numerous costs associated with response. Supervisor Knabe made mention of the strike at the ports that cost the economy a billion dollars a day for perspective on the matter. Chief Hutchens also commented in noting the bomb scare at the Norwalk Blue Line station and how that response is proof that county employees are erring on the side of caution. Ms. Carter reiterated that the JTTF takes every threat seriously emphasizing the need for community involvement to avoid future incidents. The federal government is not likely to thwart a future attack without the help of local law enforcement and the tips from the community on which enforcement is based. She mentioned the tip line at 310-477-6565.

Commissioner Cole asked Ms. Carter how many of the tips investigated have turned out to be viable terrorist threats. Ms. Carter did not have an answer regarding what percentage were actual threats but mentioned that there have been 430 investigations from the tip line. There have been several arrests, though

none specifically for terrorist activities.

Commissioner Liu of the Quality and Productivity Commission commented on an article in the LA Times regarding a telecommunications merger. She commented that the new technologies are amazing but that in an actual emergency, the methods of communication with which we're familiar will not be available. She questioned whether there is a plan in place to cope with that possibility. Supervisor Knabe commented that the county has been working on acquiring mobile microwave trucks to allow for communication off of satellites in case the local infrastructure makes other methods impossible. Ms. Perett commented that the Emergency Operations Center has numerous redundant styles of communication within it including satellite communication. Through a homeland security grant, satellite communications have been installed in 137 locations throughout the county including all 88 cities.

Supervisor Knabe thanked the Commission for an opportunity to discuss homeland security issues and thanked the panel members for their participation and for the information that was presented. Chairman Philibosian also expressed his appreciation to the panel members for taking their valuable time to ensure that the commissioners were made aware of the actions taken by the County in this important area.

[Return to Top of Presentation](#)

[Return to Agenda](#)



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