



Date: November 5, 2001
To: HENRY TABOADA, CITY MANAGER *HT*
From: JEROME E. LANCE, CHIEF OF POLICE *JEL*
For: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
Subject: SWORN POLICE OFFICER STAFFING

This memorandum has been prepared pursuant to a request from Councilmember Shultz at the October 2, 2001 City Council Meeting regarding Police Department staffing.

Police Officer Staffing Levels

Over the years, a general rule has evolved for determining the optimum level of police officer staffing for municipal police departments. The general rule is two police officers per thousand residents.

The International City/County Management Association (ICMA) Center for Performance Measurement recently published the sixth annual report of survey information, which included 54 cities with populations of 100,000 or greater. In that report, the mean sworn police officer staffing level for those 54 cities was 2.02 officers per 1000 residents. Based on the 2000 census data, the population of Long Beach is 461,500. The Fiscal Year 2001-2002 budget authorizes a staffing level of 913.5 sworn police officers. This results in a staffing level of 1.98 police officers per thousand residents. An additional 9.5 police officers (totaling 923) would be necessary to achieve the two police officers per thousand residents ratio.

Crime Reduction Focus

The primary focus of the Long Beach Police Department is to reduce crime through a visible police presence and community partnerships. The Patrol Bureau provides the majority of that visible presence, staffing over 62 percent of the police officers in the Department. Patrol staffing levels directly impact response time, an important indicator for an agency servicing a large jurisdiction. The Long Beach Police Department's priority one response time has been historically rapid under significant service demands. In 2000, the Police Department received 239,672 emergency calls for service; and responded with a priority one response time of 4.6 minutes, among the fastest of the nation's large cities.

The secondary focus is to investigate and solve crimes. This is handled by the Investigations Bureau which staffs over 20 percent of the Department's police officers. In total, over 80 percent of Department staffing is assigned in the community to fight crime.

Variables Impacting Staffing Levels

Many variables impact the optimum number of officers required to provide public safety. Population density, crime trends, demographics, economic prosperity, education, area size, technology, and community demands all have a bearing on the optimum staffing level. The FBI reports that, among other factors, the composition of an area's population, especially youth concentration, significantly affects the volume and type of crimes occurring. California is the only state where projected juvenile population growth will outpace the growth of senior citizenry in the near future. Juveniles aged 17 and under account for nearly 30% of Long Beach's population.

Each year, several semi-predictable types of gains and losses impact Police Department actual staffing levels. Staffing levels are typically maintained by hiring new police recruits (and occasionally officers transferring from other departments) to replace retirees (service and disability), terminations, and voluntary resignations. While the numbers of each category vary annually, the Long Beach Police Department typically loses between 20-25 officers per year.

In addition, the way in which a department utilizes civilian staffing (comprising approximately one-third of the Department's staff), communications technology, and deployment options such as one-officer cars, bike patrols, community policing, and specialized details, all have a bearing on the number of officers needed.

In order to improve effectiveness and efficiency, the Department implemented a number of equipment and technology upgrades in recent years. These improvements, which allow officers more time to perform police work in the community, include Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD), individually assigned radios, computers in every police unit, less than lethal weapons, an Automated Reporting System, a Records Management System, and a document imaging program.

Summary

Both the budgeted and actual staffing levels of the Long Beach Police Department are close to a ratio of two officers per thousand residents. The use of budgeted overtime, specialized task forces, civilian staffing and technological improvements further optimizes the effectiveness of our police officers. The threats of terrorism, the increase in gang violence, and the weakened economy all pose challenges for the future of law enforcement. The Long Beach Police Department will continue their efforts to ensure the safety and security of every person who lives, works or visits Long Beach.

Please direct any inquiries concerning this matter to me or Chief of Staff, Lieutenant Jerry Gadbaw at extension 87301.