

**OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS
SHAPING CALIFORNIA POLICING**

by

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The Command College Futures Study Project is a FUTURES study of a particular emerging issue of relevance to law enforcement. Its purpose is NOT to predict the future; rather, to project a variety of possible scenarios useful for strategic planning in anticipation of the emerging landscape facing policing organizations.

This journal article was created using the futures forecasting process of Command College and its outcomes. Defining the future differs from analyzing the past, because it has not yet happened. In this article, methodologies have been used to discern useful alternatives to enhance the success of planners and leaders in their response to a range of possible future environments.

Managing the future means influencing it—creating, constraining and adapting to emerging trends and events in a way that optimizes the opportunities and minimizes the threats of relevance to the profession.

The views and conclusions expressed in the Command College Futures Project and journal article are those of the author, and are not necessarily those of the CA Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST).

The purpose of a law enforcement agency is to provide safety, service, and security to the people who have hired them for protection. The cost of providing police service continues to increase; agencies are adjusting their operations to meet the goal of reducing crimes and providing safe communities. During the economic crisis of 2010 and beyond, law enforcement executives are looking deeper into their operations to determine what adjustments can be implemented to effectively accomplish their department's mission. These adjustments could cause municipalities to privatize, regionalize, reduce service, or eliminate an entire police agency in favor of contracting for that service. An opportunity, though, is knocking.

California has nearly six hundred law enforcement agencies.¹ Of these agencies, there are about seventy state-level law enforcement departments.² The staffing size and responsibilities of these police agencies range from very small to extremely large, and with their own responsibilities and missions. With the steep decline in fiscal stability in California, a change in the dynamics of how state policing agencies are funded and tasked is needed. One alternative warranting serious consideration would be to transform the myriad of state agencies into a new California State Police.

Policing 2010

In 2008, a survey was conducted with two hundred (200) police agencies across the United States. These agencies indicated there had been an increase in crime since the current economic crisis occurred: thirty-nine (39) percent increase in robberies, thirty-two (32) percent increase in burglaries, and forty (40) percent increase in thefts. The

¹ California Peace Officer Standards and Training, December 8, 2009, http://www.post.ca.gov/Resources/Law_Enforcement_Links/agency

² California Peace Officer Standards and Training, December 8, 2009, http://www.post.ca.gov/Resources/Law_Enforcement_Links/agency

majorities of these agencies were facing funding cuts, and have reduced overtime expenditures.³ Crime is on the rise! Unfortunately, it is rising at a time when diminishing resources are adversely impacting our ability to respond.

Many municipalities are familiar with the concept of regionalization of resources and services. Suppose all state-level police agencies used this concept to combine into a California State Police (CSP)? This would mean the California Highway Patrol, the Department of Justice, Fish and Game, State Parks, and others would be re-conceptualized as one mega-agency encompassing all current responsibilities, only with a significantly streamlined bureaucratic support structure.

In this structure, the CSP would be able to fulfill the primary State mission. It would also be able to provide local municipalities assistance with complex, costly, and time-consuming investigations. Benefactors would be municipalities who do not have the ability or funding to manage their own in-depth, complex, and labor consuming investigations. CSP assistance would translate to savings to local agencies, who could return uniformed personnel to the field to focus on community outreach, non-complex crimes, and crimes in progress. Imagine how this could look if the bold steps were taken to transform intent into reality.

CSP 2018

It is summer 2018, and a crime specialist sits behind a large computer monitor watching numerous law enforcement actions take place. The specialist works for the CSP, and his purpose is to ensure that proper notifications are made to the appropriate police authorities throughout the entire State of California if a volatile event is identified.

³ Police Report Crime Spikes. USA Today. Retrieved March 20, 2009, http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2009-01-26-econcrime_N.htm

The CSP was created in 2012, when the incoming Governor decided to combine multiple State law enforcement agencies to preserve scarce funding (and, in fact, to avoid eliminating many of those agencies due to fiscal limits). At the same time, municipal law enforcement agencies were reducing their staffing levels at all ranks due to similar budget pressures. In many communities, responses to calls for service had been delayed or eliminated. Minor crimes were not being investigated due to a lack of staffing, and the local district attorneys were not prosecuting crimes. Public outcry reached new levels for more policing services. In 2013, Assembly Bill 12690 was overwhelmingly passed, creating the CSP and directing it to provide assistance to local police agencies with major investigations.

Having overcome the most difficult hurdle to consolidate state agencies, the next steps seemed only natural. In 2015, government and law enforcement leaders decided a more efficient method of record keeping and a criminal intelligence center was needed to assist with inter-agency communications. The communication and data flow capabilities had increased, while the costs associated for this service continued to decrease. Data storage capacities were increasing daily and nearing unlimited potential. The greatest concern was the security of information. It was obvious to state and local law enforcement executives that maintaining this data at one location reduced each police agency's liability and responsibilities. The CSP was given the responsibility to maintain records for local law enforcement agencies. The end result was a significant reduction in local expenditures for database systems and data security.

With the use of emerging information technologies, the CSP specialist is fully prepared to monitor and deploy resource to any emergency. On one occasion of note, the

specialist was alerted to his computer monitor. Data streaming across the monitor advised there was an officer-involved shooting occurring in a remote section of Modoc County. Several officers were wounded and multiple suspects were outstanding. First responders determined the officers were assaulted due to the discovery of a quadruple homicide. The use of real-time data allowed the specialist to request mutual aid and deploy CSP personnel to the scene from Alturas, California. The initial investigation team of six investigators and six crimes scene analysts were on scene within a matter of hours. The Modoc County Sheriff personnel secured the scene until the investigators arrived.

Once the CSP team had arrived, all deputies returned to their patrol officer duties except for one liaison officer. It is evident the community's perception is that a thorough and impartial investigation will be completed as concerned neighbors watch with confidence. As the investigation team transmits crime data to the CSP database for analysis while they perform the investigation, the database quickly identifies two persons of interest in this horrendous crime.

Of course, no such coordinated response is possible today. To create that capacity, significant work to realign personnel, resources and the management of various State functions and agencies would have to occur. This is no small task; absent the sustained economic crisis we are in, one might think it too much. Considering some of the less tenable alternatives (like closing agencies to balance the State budget), this story, or one much like it, may not be too far off into the future.

Needed Change

There are seventy state-level police agencies, a myriad of organizations often perplexing for local police agencies to determine which one to contact for the situation at hand. Placing the agencies under one umbrella would in itself simplify state-level policing, save costs and increases efficiencies. This concept is not unique, as many state law enforcement agencies across the nation currently conduct or assist with local investigations.

Massachusetts State Police is an excellent example of state-supplied investigators conducting complex criminal investigations while providing other services to local entities to address crime.⁴ The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) has also been testing a similar program in identified pilot areas. Since 2004, there has been a reduction in crime ranging from 10 to 40 percent in the RCMP's jurisdiction.⁵ This has been a result of the RCMP providing a regional police service through integrating their services with many other police departments and provincial governments to address multi-jurisdictional crime. They have learned through experiences that integrating their personnel is an effective manner to provide specialized services. "This model allows local police to deal with local crime, supplemented by the specialized units which results in a big win for public safety, for the community and for our members."⁶ RCMP has been focusing on this regionalization of services to local law enforcement for over the past six (6) years. Combining state level enforcement agencies into one unified state police department would create a huge cost saving benefit to California through the

⁴ Massachusetts State Police, December 8, 2009, <http://www.mass.gov>

⁵ Excerpts From Today's Forum on Regionalization of Police Services in the LMD, January 21, 2010, <http://cb.grc.ca/ViewPage.action?siteNodeId=50&contentId=2479>

⁶ Excerpts From Today's Forum on Regionalization of Police Services in the LMD, January 21, 2010, <http://cb.grc.ca/ViewPage.action?siteNodeId=50&contentId=2479>

elimination of redundant services, reduced staffing, and less infrastructure while providing an important investigative service to local police departments.

Operating Expenses

The elimination of state-level police department redundancies would provide a leaner and more responsive CSP. The cost savings would be immense for the people of California. An example of the savings potential can be drawn from an assessment of the three largest State law enforcement agencies: The 2009/2010 budget for the California Highway Patrol is over two billion dollars.⁷ The Department of Justice's Law Enforcement Division has a budget of over \$225 million.⁸ The Department of Fish and Game's Law Enforcement Division's budget is over \$65 million dollars.⁹ The elimination of most redundancies including departmental executives, work locations, equipment, and supplies will reduce overall costs of the operations. To determine the overall savings to the State, of course, an extensive study would need to be completed.

As part of the California State Asset Management Proposal, Governor Schwarzenegger proposed selling some high-value properties in 2009. This action, along with other cost saving measures could generate the State over \$2 billion in future revenues.¹⁰ Most of the State's seventy police agencies have offices located in every California County. Many of these offices will fall into the aforementioned category of high-value property. The reduction of these redundant assets, therefore, will generate millions of revenue for the State. The redundancy of seventy (70) State police agencies' costs with building maintenance, janitorial, landscaping, electricity, telephone, water

⁷ California Governor's Budget, December 9, 2009, <http://govbud.dof.ca.gov/StateAgencyBudgets/2000>

⁸ California Governor's Budget, December 9, 2009, <http://govbud.dof.ca.gov/StateAgencyBudgets/0010>

⁹ California Governor's Budget, December 9, 2009, <http://govbud.dof.ca.gov/StateAgencyBudgets/3000>

¹⁰ California Department of State and Consumer Agency, February 1, 2010, http://www.scsa.ca.gov/documents/publications/FAQAsset_Management.pdf

service, sewer service, garbage collection will be reduced. Support staff could be reduced by combining offices, including clerical, analysts, accountants, and legal services. The combining of record keeping and security would be a considerable savings. The elimination of redundant executive staff could save millions of dollars. The average police agency spends fifteen percent of their annual budget for management costs.

The assistance to local agencies would further provide a cost savings to the local communities by eliminating on-scene investigation and subsequent follow-up. Local agencies, already reeling under pressure to cut staff, could generate savings through reduced staffing levels.¹¹ The median salary for a California police officer with approximately 10-19 years of service is \$55,000.¹² Using this pay scale, an in-depth investigation consisting of three detectives for four weeks would cost the police agency \$13,500. This figure does not include the salaries for support personnel needed by the detectives. Small police agencies budget an average of one hundred eighty thousand (\$180,000) dollars to investigate burglaries.¹³

Due to declining funding, one local agency has begun to reduce services within their city. Their detectives evaluate the need to investigate prior to responding to many robberies, sexual assaults, and burglaries. In previous years, these detectives were investigating fourteen (14) percent of crimes; that has fallen to about ten (10) percent.¹⁴ Having CSP assist with complex investigations would allow municipalities to be able to

¹¹ Robert Presley Institute of Criminal Investigation, January 21, 2010, <http://www.post.ca.gov/Training/ici/default.asp>

¹² Payscale, January 21, 2010, http://www.payscale.com/research/US/Job=Police_or_Sheriff's_Patrol_Officer/Salary

¹³ Criminal Justice, <http://books.google.com/books?id=hhUUUp3hHQUC&pg=PA105&lpg=PA105&dq=police+expenditure+f+or+crime+investigations&source>

¹⁴ Budget Cuts Hurt Sacramento. ABC News 10. Retrieved March 20, 2009, <http://www.news10.net/news/local/story.aspx?storyid=52079>

reduce their expenditures while still solving serious crime. Local staffing remaining could then focus on community outreach, non-complex crimes, and crimes in progress to sustain the community's quality of life. In years past, this might have been seen as an unnecessary level of State interaction with local agencies. Unfortunately, the new reality of government budgets dictates looking anew at ways to resolve safety concerns in markedly different ways. Interestingly, a panel of experts convened to study this issue concurs.

Expert Guidance

An expert panel from law enforcement, politics, criminal law, and civil rights advocates was convened and provided insight to the concept of CSP. The panel concluded there is a high probability that a new type of state-level regionalization is needed. The abysmal economic future has created insecurity for funding police departments, thus the need for State assistance is a viable path to ensure public safety.

The expert panel envisioned that the primary function of the CSP would be to provide appropriate staffing levels and investigators with the required level of expertise strategically located throughout the State of California. It is conceivable that portions of the state would be separated into CSP divisions, similar to the current eight (8) field divisions of the Highway Patrol, which would allow for the greatest deployment of personnel based on population. Each CSP division would have sufficient police detectives to meet the need for investigations.

These investigators would have a full array of skills to meet any need of the municipal police departments. Northern and Southern California crime labs would be available to conduct all forensics. Having both the subject matter experts and sufficient

personnel deployment levels will provide investigative consistency. The benefit of having CSP provide investigation services to allied agencies will be evident through cost savings and reduced staffing levels.

Having local police departments being able return most of their personnel to patrol duties, their efforts will surely have an impact on reducing level crimes. Partnering and building relationships with communities continue to have positive results with an emphasis on reducing crime in those jurisdictions.¹⁵ The CSP would provide impartial investigations throughout the entire state of California. Local police departments would be able to avoid highly charged political or alleged civil rights violation accusations.

The panel identified concerns regarding such a partnership between local agencies and a CSP: Would a CSP provide consistent investigative services throughout the State? What crimes would be considered local or state investigative responsibilities? Who determines the level of importance of complex and in-depth investigations throughout the State? In spite of these questions, the panel supported the formation of a CSP as a logical means to sustain necessary levels of law enforcement across the State. As the cost of policing services continues to burden to the citizens of California, the need and benefits of the development or merger of a new state-level bureaucracy must be fully explored.

Opportunity Knocking

Regardless of the current fiscal restraints, providing law enforcement services effectively and efficiently should be the measure for a law enforcement agency. Given all of the prior information, it is apparent that California law enforcement at all levels could improve their operations while maintaining the basic mission of safety, service, and

¹⁵ National Institute of Justice, January 21, 2010, <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/topics/crime/gun-violence/prevention/displacement.htm>

security to the people being served. Waiting too long may result in law enforcement losing an opportunity that is knocking.