

CONSOLIDATION OF POLICE SERVICES IN CALIFORNIA

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.

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The year is 2020, it's 2:00 am and Governor Riley Johnson gets a call that there is another series of domestic terrorist attacks; this time they have occurred in several large cities simultaneously. A portion of Interstate 5 in Los Angeles has been destroyed by a large explosion, causing chaos throughout the entire City. The protest in Oakland has grown to over 1.2 million active protestors and they have taken control of both Oakland and portions of San Francisco. The California/Mexico border protest in Calexico has now caused a breach in border security. 20,000 Mexican citizens who were staging at the border have now entered the US, but were met by 5,000 well-armed "Militia for Justice" members. The incidents have overwhelmed all local law enforcement agencies; they have even saturated the capacity of regional support.

Governor Riley needs to restore order and provide the citizens of California with the highest level of safety, service and security. As he calls the Commissioner of the California Department of Public Safety, known as Cal DPS, reflecting on his first term when he signed the Executive Order creating the DPS. That order consolidated all state-level police and fire services under one agency to maximize the efficiency of public safety. Cal DPS Commissioner Julie Benton advises the Governor she has already mobilized more than 3500 officers, including command and support staff, to the three locations. About 3,000 officers working under the same mission and policy, wearing the same uniform, DPS officers were consistently trained no matter where they were assigned. They also relied on a single and very effective communication system. Because of the training and mobilization discipline of Cal DPS, they quickly established an effective Incident Command System in place and had boots on the ground at each of the incidents within 90 minutes.

Could this happen? Possibly, and on a somewhat smaller scale it already has. As local, county and state budgets have tightened, the idea of consolidation, merging or sharing law

enforcement services has become a focus of interest to elected officials, policy makers and law enforcement executives. In 2011, Governor Brown took steps to consolidate agencies and eliminate some redundancies in the name of efficiency. He directed the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to restructure their headquarters, eliminating 400 unneeded positions to save \$30 million General Fund dollars. He eliminated the Office of the Secretary of Education, merged the State Personnel Board and the Department of Personnel Administration into a single human resources office, and proposed the elimination of unnecessary and costly boards and commissions. He also eliminated the state's federal stimulus fund watchdog. Gov. Brown's policies reflect the fact that efficiency isn't just about cuts—it's also about better coordination, which may be what is needed to consolidate state level law enforcement agencies in California.

How It Would Work

The year is 2020; Cal DPS executive management staff meets with the Governor's staff for their monthly briefing and provides a succinct public safety briefing, which includes all significant law enforcement and homeland security issues in California. Cal DPS was created after a task force was assembled to explore ways to improve law enforcement efficiency in the current tough fiscal times. Additionally, local law enforcement continued to shrink, and it became more and more difficult for local law enforcement to respond and handle calls for service and to respond to minor crimes. As a result they relied more on state law enforcement to assist with providing essential services to their communities. These services included drug and gang taskforces, assistance with complex investigations, and augmentation of patrol to address an issue beyond the capabilities of the municipality. With the increase in request from local municipalities to assist in cities that were overwhelmed with the state's rising crime rate public

outry for improved services by California's police officers, and a lack of state and federal funding to support the assistance the Governor, it became imperative the state's law enforcement leaders come up with a feasible solution.

The result was a statewide law enforcement agency that provided all law enforcement services into one integrated Department of Public Safety. In 2015, the California Assembly and Senate overwhelmingly passed the bill, which created the Cal DPS. A two-year transition program began; in May of 2017, the California Department of Public Safety was fully functional. Cal DPS was comprised of five Divisions and two Offices reporting to the Department Secretary. The Departments and Offices were comprised as follows:

- California Highway Patrol
- Division of Law Enforcement
- Division of Fire and Emergency Management
- Division of Homeland Security
- Division of Victim Services
- Office of Internal Affairs; and
- Office of Inspector General

Although there was an initial increase in costs to the State's budget related to startup costs, expenses associated with equipment, training, communications and infrastructure, the State began to realize a savings in funding as early as year three. The transition wasn't without some growing pains, but the consolidation began to pay big dividends by improving law enforcement efficiency throughout California. Consistent training, efficient mobilization and radio interoperability became the standard for other state's law enforcement agencies to follow.

Training was consolidated which ensured consistency in the development and delivery of the training curriculum.

At its inception, Cal DPS took over most statewide homeland security responsibilities, and was able to assist local municipalities with complex investigations and enforcement issues that had risen above the capabilities of their agencies. Additionally, each Area command became a “one stop shop” for the public to get information and action taken in regards to a variety of issues, from having a ticket signed off or obtaining a hunting license, to issues involving under age sales of alcoholic beverages.

All front line officers were cross-trained as first responders to any state level law enforcement incident. For example, the officer that was patrolling the state park that morning may be the same officer that was investigating a major traffic collision on the nearby freeway that afternoon. The officer that was patrolling the waterways on a Wednesday could very possibly be working in an unmarked car working an under aged alcohol buy on Thursday. The expected outcome is that if officers were cross-trained in several state level law enforcement functions, they could provide a force multiplier for the agency and a much more efficient officer for the people of California.

One of the biggest benefits of Cal DPS was their ability to mobilize to any incident within California within a relatively short time frame. A large number of consistently trained personnel, working on the same radio communication system, under the same policy and procedures, could quickly respond to help mitigate any critical incident or mass civil disturbance. This was clearly shown during the famous “Save our Trees” demonstrations in Humboldt County in 2018, and the

“Million Angry Cyclists” ride and unlawful demonstration that took place at the State Capitol in Sacramento in 2019.

Of course, no such coordinated effort is underway today. To make this consolidation a reality agencies (State or otherwise) must agree this is an efficient alternative to the current system. Absent an economic crisis where consolidation becomes a necessity, it may be considered too large of an undertaking. However, with the current trend in state government to consolidate agencies and eliminate non-essential functions, the concept is worthy of study and feasibility assessment. Looking at where we are today, there is ample room to reduce redundancy and enhance public safety through the astute administration of scarce public funds.

Law Enforcement in 2013

There are approximately six hundred law enforcement agencies in California. Of these agencies, there are about 70 State-level departments employing peace officers or administering public safety, law enforcement, emergency management and homeland security functions. This current scenario is costly and creates inefficiencies among state, local and governmental agencies, especially when there is a significant law enforcement emergency. The size and responsibilities of these agencies varies from very small to extremely large and each work off their own vision, mission, policies and procedures. With the continual decline in fiscal stability in California, a change in how state policing is administered and funded is worth exploring. One alternative that warrants consideration is to reorganize state government and align its law enforcement functions.

Why consider consolidation of all statewide police services? Beside the shrinking state budget, it is a world in which law enforcement has had to become more sophisticated, more

diverse in services, and technologically proficient in order to deliver minimal services. In the 1950's for example, police rarely entered a school building. Their presence was not required. Today we have Start Smart for new drivers, Every 15 Minutes and DARE programs, School Resource Officers, occasional drug sweeps and undercover drug investigations involving students! What can be said of the schools can also be said of the workplace.

It is not a world in which law enforcement can effectively police without expanded resources and efficient use of staffing. Whereas local and regional police forces traditionally had better resources to protect citizens against criminal behaviors, conduct quality investigations of criminal acts, and to respond more quickly than larger, less-local agencies, that may no longer be true. The nature of crime is changing. Cybercrime, crimes which are international and interstate in nature, both domestic and international terrorism, and sophisticated narcotics trafficking are examples of current criminal activities which are usually beyond the scope and resources of some of the smaller state law enforcement agencies and most small municipalities to investigate.

Many municipalities are familiar with the concept of regionalization or consolidation of resources and services. Suppose all state level law enforcement agencies used the concept to combine into a California Department of Public Safety (Cal DPS)? When state level law enforcement agencies are mobilized, there is usually a delay with logistics such as transportation needs, radio interoperability, mission objectives, to the all-important who will be in charge. It may be time that a consolidated effort is made by state level agencies to unify in the name of efficiency. Agencies such as the California Highway Patrol, Fish and Wildlife, State Parks, Alcohol Beverage Commission, California State Fair Police, as well as the law enforcement/investigation functions of Department of Motor Vehicles, Department of Consumer Affairs and Department of Toxic Substances as well as others would be consolidated as one large

agency encompassing all law enforcement responsibilities, with a single bureaucratic support structure.

In this model, Cal DPS would be able to provide all law enforcement services and fulfill the State's primary law enforcement mission. Cal DPS would also be able to provide assistance to allied agencies. They would participate and be proactive in collective law enforcement efforts, which promote traffic and public safety (e.g., corridor safety task forces, gang reduction, intervention and prevention programs, vehicle theft and safety services programs). In addition to providing all state level law enforcement services, Cal DPS could provide assistance to local municipalities as needed, allowing the local agencies to concentrate on maximizing their personnel in the field where they are needed to serve their communities. Cal DPS would be available to assist the local agencies with costly and time-consuming investigations that may be beyond the scope, expertise and size of available resources.

By improving coordination between the nearly 70 state-level departments, consolidation would help minimize redundancies in administrative functions and focus more resources on strengthening law enforcement services delivered to the public. The end result would be improvement in efficiency of public safety. Consolidation and the improvement of law enforcement efficiency could result in better service and a faster response. By operating in a single mission statement and vision, the message and service of state peace officers would be consistent whether you are driving up the Interstate in Crescent City or fishing in a lake in San Diego. Consolidation will also create a virtual "one stop shop," to allow people to obtain information about a variety of law enforcement services at one location.

The Time Is Right

The elimination of state-level law enforcement redundancies would be a huge savings to the State budget. For example, in 2012/2013 fiscal year the annual budget of the California Highway Patrol is over two billion dollars. The Department of Fish and Wildlife Law Enforcement Division's budget is more than 70 million dollars, and the Alcohol Beverage Control Commission's is over 50 million dollars. The elimination of most redundancies (including departmental executives, facilities, purchasing costs, equipment, supplies and various work locations) could provide a significant savings to the general fund. Consolidating these functions and positions into a single department would eliminate the need for various management and administrative positions.

The consolidation of facilities, equipment and support staff can have a huge impact on efficient operation and the associated cost of doing business. Redundant training facilities could be eliminated. For example, facilities, like the CHP Academy, can be identified as primary training centers that could take on the added responsibilities and then eliminate the smaller closely located training facilities. Work locations, legal services, support staff, janitorial services, and other essential staff services and functions could be reduced by combining offices.

Exact savings cannot be determined without an in-depth analysis of all related costs, but it is clear that a significant savings would be realized. In October 2011, Florida assembled a task force to assess the impact of consolidating statewide environmental law enforcement. The task force found that inefficiency arises from having multiple agencies providing separate law enforcement services on similar, adjacent, but jurisdictionally different lands. In some instances, there may be a Fish and Wildlife officer patrolling a management area adjacent to a state park

being patrolled by a Department of Environmental Protection officer, which is also adjacent to a state forest patrolled by a Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services officer. The task force concluded these agencies are interdependent, with each realizing value-added services that are not present when separated. The Task Force concluded consolidating agencies would result in a highly effective, more efficient state law enforcement division having enhanced patrol capability and response presence.

Another example of law enforcement regionalization is the State of Alabama, where in January 2013, Governor Robert Bentley signed an executive order to allow state-level law enforcement agencies to build upon recent efforts to improve coordination. Some of the benefits will include minimizing administrative redundancies, common purchasing, consolidated law enforcement fleet maintenance and a unified communication infrastructure. Additionally, Governor Bentley announced that legislation aimed at further streamlining state-level law enforcement is currently being finalized and will be submitted to the Alabama Legislature during the 2013 Regular Session. Certainly, these examples can be guideposts for the future of California's state law enforcement consolidation. Although the scale and nature of enforcement may be different, the potential for both savings and efficiencies demand further study.

Conclusion

Regardless of the current fiscal state, and current trend of eliminating redundancies in state government, the operational efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and the needs and expectations of law enforcement services by the people of California should be paramount factors in final decision making. To maximize resources and provide better and more efficient law enforcement

in California, consolidation of police services needs to be seriously considered. It is a matter that could be of great public interest, and eventually, in the best interest of our emerging profession.

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