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Homeland Security in San Mateo County

Issue

How does San Mateo County receive, coordinate, implement and account for grants awarded by Federal and State Homeland Security Programs? Have the grants awarded been sufficient to meet the County's security needs?

Summary

An organizational process to manage emergencies due to natural disasters existed in California prior to September 11, 2001. The organization consisted of the Governor's office of Emergency Services and included 58 regional groups divided into three regional areas. San Mateo County is in the "Coastside Region" with 14 other counties from Del Norte to Monterey. An emergency system for all California first responders is called the Standard Emergency Management System (SEMS).

Following September 11, 2001, and over the past four years, the Sheriff's Area Office of Emergency Services (OES) in San Mateo County (part of the Coastside Region), has received a total of \$ 10.7 million from the Department of Homeland Security. Although this office provides the administrative support for Homeland Security grants, there is a multi disciplinary "Terrorism Working Group" that plans, reviews, and makes recommendations for the grants. A "Terrorism Approval Authority" makes the final decisions on projects submitted by the working group. All departments and agencies within San Mateo County have cooperated well amongst themselves and other counties.

In order to qualify for any Homeland Security grants, all counties must practice an emergency management system called "National Incident Management System (NIMS)", which is similar to SEMS.

A nationwide problem associated with Federal grants exists because of the requirement of municipalities to spend their own funds in advance and then be reimbursed. However, for FY 2005, the federal government has allowed \$2.86 million for the County of San Mateo to be drawn down as a one year, one-time exemption. It has been noted that S.F. Bay Area funding was slashed by 23 percent for FY 2005.

The San Mateo County Sheriff's Area OES states that funding is minimal at best, and likely inadequate to support the staffing necessary for the prevention of terrorist activities. Coordination between first responders remains a concern within and among all Coastside Regional Administrative offices. Homeland Security grant funds are also needed to pay operating costs to monitor, maintain and repair existing assets and resources.

The Grand Jury recommends that the Board of Supervisors and the Sheriff should make every effort to acquire and implement sophisticated communication technologies, provide additional hiring and training of personnel for the prevention terrorism, draw down funds before the October 2005 deadline, and negotiate with other counties to save costs, improve interaction, share resources, and coordinate services and training.



Homeland Security in San Mateo County

Issue

How does San Mateo County receive, coordinate, implement, and account for grants awarded by Federal and State Homeland Security Programs? Have the grants awarded been sufficient to meet the County's security needs?

Background

Before the September 11, 2001 attack, the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES) was established to make effective use of all state resources to deal with any emergency in California. The statewide OES includes government at all levels. There are 58 regional groups divided into three regional areas. (*See Appendix A*). San Mateo County is in the "Coastside Region" with 14 other counties from Del Norte to Monterey. In San Mateo County, the Sheriff's Area Office of Emergency Service (Sheriff's Area OES) was the agency designated to take administrative responsibility for emergency management of natural disasters in San Mateo County.

The Sheriff's Area Office of Emergency Services is funded primarily through a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) between the 20 incorporated cities and the County of San Mateo. Most of the funds pay for services created in response to natural disasters such as earthquakes, forest fires, and floods. The cities contribute money to fund the JPA based upon a formula that takes into account the population and average assessed property values of each city. The County then matches the funds contributed by the cities. The remainder of the Sheriff's Area OES budget comes from State and Federal Emergency Management Assistance (FEMA) program funds.

All 20 cities in San Mateo County have emergency plans for natural disasters that are in compliance with the "Standardized Emergency Management Systems" (SEMS), a statewide program originally adopted from an outgrowth of the coordination problems encountered during the Oakland fire in 1991. SEMS requires coordinated training throughout each county for all governmental agencies. SEMS is adhered to and used for all major events in the county when OES is involved including presidential visits, large city and county festivals, and high profile Superior Court cases. Failure to comply with SEMS may make a city or agency ineligible for recovery funds. Only state agencies are mandated to use SEMS with the caveat of the recovery funding issues.

After September 11, the Sheriff's Area Office of Emergency Services received additional funds mainly from the Department of Homeland Security grants through several federal programs (*See Appendix B*). Homeland Security programs are administered by the Office of Domestic Preparedness (ODP), the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and the Transportation Security Administration (TSA).

Most Homeland Security grants are administered directly through California State agencies and administration offices. The total Federal grants to California to date has been \$282.6 million (*Appendix B*). Of that, approximately \$10.7 million in Homeland Security grants have been awarded to the County of San Mateo.

Since 2001, the Sheriff's Area OES has received eight US Department of Homeland Security grants totaling \$ 7.83 million. The pending 2005 grant of \$2.84 million awarded recently will bring the total grants received to \$ 10.7 million. The County received \$2.8 million on March 1, 2005, with the remainder to be disbursed over time until the total award is depleted by December 2006. Non-completed grants are still open and in use. (*Grants awarded are shown in Appendix B.*)

The San Mateo County Sheriff's Area OES does not decide the allocation of expenditures, although it does provide the administrative support to the grants. The multidisciplinary Terrorism Working Group, chaired by the Undersheriff with membership from Emergency Medical Services Agency, Public Works & Transportation, Fire Departments, Law Enforcement, Coroner, Red Cross, and Public Safety Dispatch, reviews the grants. The group then recommends the needed projects to the Terrorism Approval Authority (*Appendix C*). There appears to be excellent cooperation among these agencies as well as between first responder agencies.

The Terrorism Working Group adopted a regional approach in its decisions to recommend grant projects to the Terrorism Approval Authority that will benefit the entire county. The State mandated the Terrorism Approval Authority as a condition of the grant. This group approves most of the Homeland Security grants, with the exception of the Emergency Management Program Grant.

The Terrorism Approval Authority first approves the projects to be funded with the Office of Homeland Security funds, then the Sheriff's Area OES submits the grants, coordinates the funded projects, does the purchasing, tracks the equipment received, and does the accounting for the grants. The Sheriff's OES retains only a 2.5 percent administrative allowance to pay for the OES and other personnel to manage the grants.

Findings

A nationwide problem associated with the Office of Homeland Security grants, as administered through each State Office of Homeland Security, has been the requirement that a county spend its own funds on grant-approved projects prior to being reimbursed

based on accurate records and receipts. Recently, Congress authorized a one-year, one-time exemption, valid until October 1, 2005, for local officials to claim their share of the money. In the past, the County of San Mateo fronted the money from Homeland Security grants, and now continues to request reimbursement for county projects and equipment as they are completed. The "Guidance for the 2005 Grant" states that "Grantees are permitted to draw down funds up to 120 days prior to the expenditure." This new feature is unique to the 2005 grant. The planning process for these funds is undertaken by the Terrorism Working Group, which recommends projects to the Terrorism Approval Authority. (It would be premature to ask for an early draw down of Federal funds until projects are identified and the grant application is approved by the State).

Federal funds for anti-terrorism efforts in the Bay Area were slashed 22.3 % to \$34.2 million from \$44 million for the 2005 grant, forcing local police, fire fighters and emergency planners to stretch their dollars. The San Francisco area, including Marin and San Mateo counties, received \$21.4 million, down from \$26.5 million (almost 20 percent). The reduced funding makes it more difficult to expand spending on terrorism prevention activities, communication equipment, and preparation against bio-terrorism.

Homeland Security Program's use of funds is governed by "Program Guidance in Federal Grants" administered by state government agencies. The Sheriff's Area OES must administer the grants according to these guidelines. County officials successfully fought for changes when faced with inflexibility on training issues. However, strict spending guidelines remain in place.

Homeland Security money is spent on the following:

1. equipment approved by the Office of Domestic Preparedness
2. training exercises, approved consultants, and trainers
3. grants "in progress" currently being used for Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), First Responders Awareness Training, training for specials teams such as SWAT, HAZ MAT (Hazardous Materials), and safety, rescue, and detection equipment
4. overtime costs to send city personnel for training, reducing city budget costs

The County benefits from three other sources of money directed at Homeland Security issues. Two of the three grants are health related.

1. The San Mateo County Health Services Agency received a grant for Public Health Preparedness for Bio-terrorism; about one million dollars total for the past five years. The grant is administered through County Public Health.
2. Three Citizen Corp/CERT grants, funded by FEMA through the Office of Homeland Security totaled \$83,072 in 2002 and 2003 for training.

A new federal system called the National Incident Management System (NIMS) is similar to the California SEMS. The Sheriff believes that the added training for NIMS will have little effect on the way San Mateo County does business through SEMS. Officials at the local level will be encouraged to use NIMS, which will be incorporated in all city and county Emergency Operations Plans. Any future Homeland Security grant

awards will rely on NIMS compliance in place of SEMS in order to qualify for grant funding.

The Northern California High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area, an established federal, state and local intelligence-based, counter-drug collaborative, also granted funds. This specific funding is dedicated to organize and establish the Northern California Regional Terrorism Threat Assessment Center (RTTAC) as a preventative measure to address terrorism issues among first responders in the operational area of the San Francisco FBI (along the coast from Monterey County to the Oregon border). The RTTAC will serve as a clearinghouse where information from state and local law enforcement, public health officials, fire, EMS and the private sector would be analyzed, prioritized and forwarded to the appropriate investigative agency, such as the FBI, Department of Health Services or local agencies.

The Sheriff's Area OES Homeland Security states that funding is minimal at best, and likely inadequate to support the staffing necessary for the prevention of terrorist activities. However, the funding supplied has resulted in improved communication and information sharing among federal, state and local first responders with the use of NIMS. The focus is currently limited to information sharing and resource exploitation for investigative support and training. Current communication systems are only effective within groups of first responders, such as fire, police, and rescue teams.

Communication and coordination between agencies requires more sophisticated equipment than is currently in use. The extended use of communication technology would make response to terrorist events more effective. A Global Positioning System (GPS) would help locate assets, resources, and trouble spots to quickly alert and position a WMD Swat Team and Mobile Field Force drawn from cities and county police. In addition, a more sophisticated communication system would allow more effective assistance among all first responders within other counties.

Coastside Regional administrative offices of emergency management recognize the need for increased and efficient sharing of services. The sheriffs of the Bay Area have been in regular communication to find ways for interactions and to stretch Homeland Security dollars by sharing and coordinating programs.

Homeland Security funds are also needed to pay operating costs to monitor, maintain and repair existing and projected assets and resources. There is a growing concern that future shortfalls in Homeland Security grants may require first responder agencies to use general funds within their own budgets to pay for these increasing costs.

Conclusions

The Sheriff's Area OES, coordinates and accounts for Homeland Security grants, and for inter-county and intra-county activities, including coordination of training, communications, and first response within and between jurisdictions of fire, law

enforcement and public health. The OES is in a pivotal position to work with sheriffs in other Bay area counties within the Coastside Regional Offices of Emergency Service to further promote and implement effective and cost-saving methods of agency cooperation, coordination of services, and personnel training.

The Terrorism Working Group and the Terrorism Approval Authority, which has the main responsibility for San Mateo County in planning, implementation and approval for Homeland Security grants, allows input and feedback from all concerned agencies. It also appears to allow for checks and balances and some measure of flexibility in a federal program that has been described as “Byzantine” by Tom Ridge, the former Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security.

The Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) has made it comparatively easy for Sheriff’s Area OES to make the transition to NIMS, a federal prerequisite needed to qualify for grants.

The ability of San Mateo County to pay for programs in advance has made a difference in the speed of acquiring Homeland Security grants. Some counties have not been able to utilize those federal funds because they could not afford to wait for reimbursement. However, the cost of operating and maintaining equipment may become a burden for first responder agencies that must rely on a constant state of readiness, and the county may need to draw down funds to keep from using general funds to cover these costs.

The Sheriff’s Area OES, through the use of Homeland Security Program training funds, has managed to fill some of the gaps created by guidelines and restrictions of the Office of Domestic Preparedness (ODP) and the “Program Guidance in Federal Grants”, as well as shortfalls in federal funding. These gaps have made it difficult to use and maintain sophisticated equipment purchased through federal programs that allow for greater flexibility and efficiency on the local level. Some inter-county training has occurred, but costs can be cut by improved communication and coordination, and the sharing of resources with other counties in the Coastside Region OES administration.

While communications *within* jurisdictions such as fire, police and public health are working very well, communications *between* these jurisdictions can be improved to provide more speed and efficiency. The Grand Jury believes the system of communications between jurisdictions within this county and between other counties will be improved by the acquisition of more needed sophisticated equipment as soon as possible.

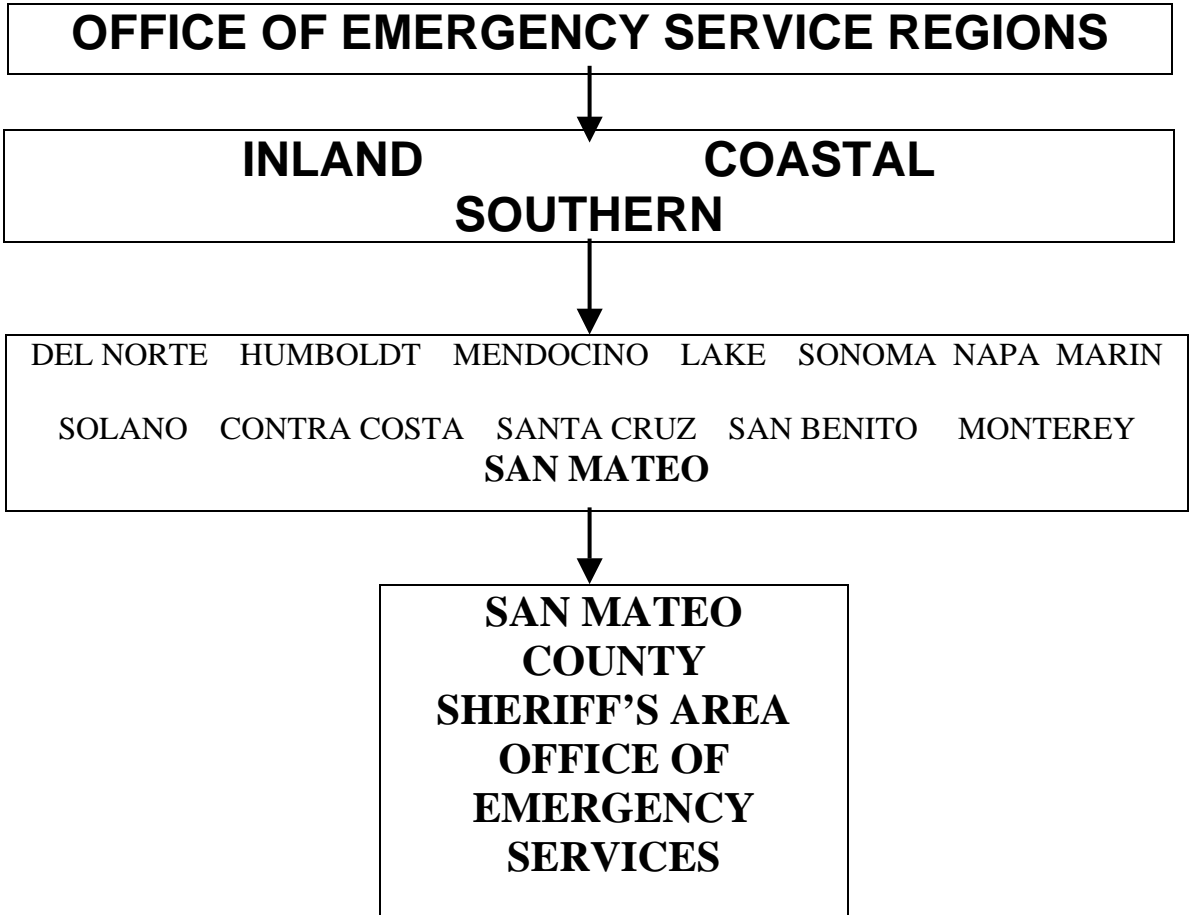
The Grand Jury determined that the Board of Supervisors and the San Mateo County jurisdictions involved in security have constructed a viable process for Homeland Security grants. However, the Sheriff’s Area OES stated that Homeland Security funding is minimal at best. Federal funding has provided only limited communications and information sharing among federal, state and local first responders. In addition, cuts in the 2005 grant have caused some concern about sufficient funding for the prevention of terrorism and the maintenance of “high tech” equipment.

Recommendations

The Board of Supervisors and the Sheriff should:

1. acquire and implement the proper technologies to further improve communications between San Mateo County first responder agencies as well as with neighboring jurisdictions.
2. provide additional hiring and training for all personnel in the Sheriff's Area Office of Emergency Services in the prevention of terrorist attacks.
3. draw down funds before the October 2005 deadline directly from the Federal government to take advantage of the unique waiver granted by Congress. These funds can be used to service, use, and maintain all equipment required for first responders, and to purchase needed equipment sooner rather than later.
4. negotiate with other Bay Area offices of emergency services within the Coastside Regional Offices of Emergency Services to improve interaction, sharing of resources, training, and cost savings.

APPENDIX A



THE URL FOR CALIFORNIA HOMELAND SECURITY IS:

<<http://www.oes.ca.gov/operational/OESHome.nsf/?OpenForm>>

APPENDIX B

1. Federal Programs

Department of Homeland Security:

First Responder Programs
 Disaster / Response Program
 Training Programs
 Research Programs

Other Federal Programs originate in:

Department of Health and Human Services
 Department of Justice
 Environmental Protection Agency

2. California State Programs

(in millions of dollars)

Homeland Security Grant Program	\$ 84.62
Law Enforcement Terrorism Program	\$ 30.78
Urban Area Security Initiative Allocation (San Francisco)	\$ 20.43
Other grant Programs to the State of California	\$ 18.96

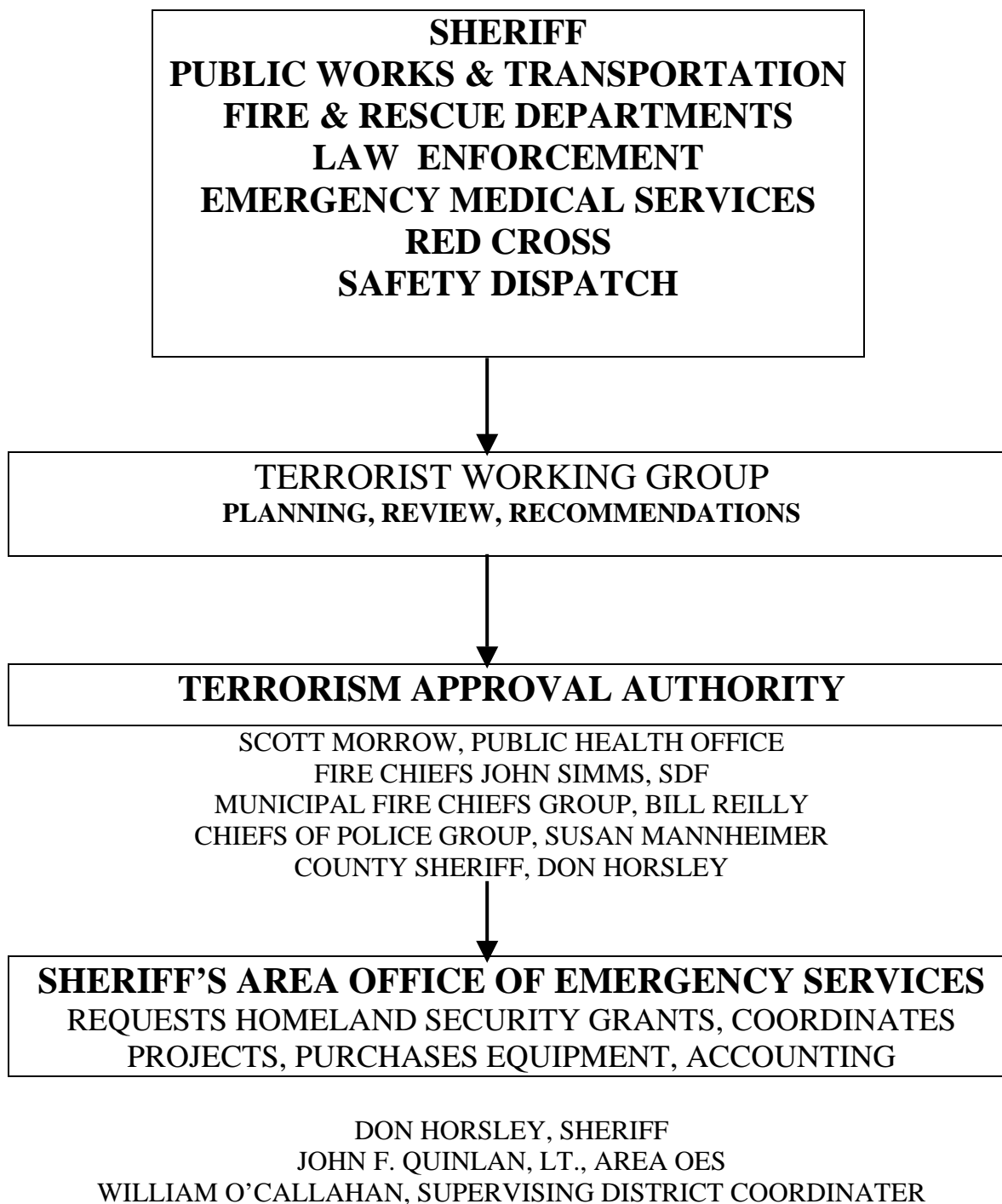
Note: (Other related resources are: State Contacts and Award Information; Resource Links for First Responders; State & Local Government coordination & Preparedness {ODP} A-133 *Audit Supplement Guidance*.)

3. Grant Origination

Grant Name	Grant Amount	Status
Office of Domestic Prep. FY 01	\$234,800	completed
Office of Domestic Prep. FY 02	\$384,888	completed
FEMA 02 Cert.	\$19,445	completed
FEMA 03 Cert,	\$21,595	completed
Office of Domestic Prep. 02 Planning	\$168,618	completed
Subtotal	\$829,346	completed
Office of Homeland Security FY 02, part I	\$697,404	in progress
Office of Homeland Security FY 03, part II	\$1,657,404	in progress
Office of Homeland Security FY 04	\$4,688,811	in progress
Sub Total	\$7,043,491	in progress
Office of Homeland Security FY 05	\$2,835,625	received
Total	\$10,708,462	

APPENDIX C

ORGANIZATION CHART FOR HOMELAND SECURITY GRANTS





COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
Inter-Departmental Correspondence

County Manager's Office

DATE: August 3, 2005
BOARD MEETING DATE: August 16, 2005
SPECIAL NOTICE: None
VOTE REQUIRED: None

TO: Honorable Board of Supervisors
FROM: John L. Maltbie, County Manager
SUBJECT: 2004-05 Grand Jury Response

Recommendation

Accept this report containing the County's response to the 2004-05 Grand Jury reports: San Mateo County Jails and Homeland Security in San Mateo County; and the County's update to the June 21st response on Improving Water Quality Flowing to the Ocean and Bay.

VISION ALIGNMENT:

Commitment: Responsive, effective and collaborative government.

Goal 20: Government decisions are based on careful consideration of future impact, rather than temporary relief or immediate gain.

This activity contributes to the goal by ensuring that all Grand Jury findings and recommendations are thoroughly reviewed by the appropriate County departments and that, when appropriate, process improvements are made to improve the quality and efficiency of services provided to the public and other agencies.

Discussion

The County is mandated to respond to the Grand Jury within 90 days from the date that reports are filed with the County Clerk and Elected Officials are mandated to respond within 60 days. It is also the County's policy to provide periodic updates to the Board and the Grand Jury on the progress of past Grand Jury recommendations requiring ongoing or further action. To that end, attached are the County's responses to the Grand Jury's reports on Homeland Security in San Mateo County issued June 2, 2005 and San Mateo County Jails issued June 14, 2005. An update to the County's June 21, 2005 response to the Grand Jury on Improving Water Quality Flowing to the Ocean and Bay has also been included.

Homeland Security in San Mateo County

Findings:

Agree with the findings with the following corrections:

Second paragraph, page five:

While Federal funds have diminished, the \$44 million that was awarded to the City and County of San Francisco has been significantly reduced. This grant is separate from the Homeland Security Grants received by San Mateo County. While San Francisco received similar Homeland Security Grants, the \$44 million figure comes from a separate grant called the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI). San Mateo County is not identified as an UASI "City," and therefore, did not receive those funds. San Mateo County did, however, receive some monies from San Francisco from the UASI grant, as did Marin County.

First paragraph, page six:

Funds that were granted to the Regional Terrorism and Threat Assessment Center (RTTAC) were awarded through the Office of Domestic Preparedness Homeland Security Grant Program. The High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) is the home of the RTTAC as both entities are intelligence centers involved in specific threats. Both are funded through different sources.

Recommendations:

The Board of Supervisors and Sheriff should:

1. Acquire and implement the proper technologies to further improve communications between San Mateo County first responder agencies as well as with neighboring jurisdictions.

Response: Concur. Current projects include information sharing technology and increased communications methods from voice, data, and wireless imaging. San Mateo County will continue to seek technology upgrades to overcome communication breakdowns as they arise.

2. Provide additional hiring and training for all personnel in the Sheriff's Area Office of Emergency Services in the prevention of terrorist attacks.

Response: Concur in part. Training personnel is essential to effective prevention efforts; however, neither the current Joint Powers Authority budget nor the current allocation of Federal Homeland Security Grant Program funds provide for increased staffing at this time.

3. Draw down funds before the October 2005 deadlines directly from the Federal government to take advantage of the unique waiver granted by Congress. These funds can be used to service, use, and maintain all equipment required for first responders, and to purchase needed equipment sooner rather than later.

Response: Concur. All funds will be drawn down before the deadline.

4. Negotiate with other Bay Area offices of emergency services within the Coastside Regional Offices of Emergency Services to improve interaction, sharing of resources, training, and cost savings.

Response: Concur. OES/HS attends and participates at all Mutual Aid Regional Advisory Council meetings with State OES, Coastal Region Staff, and all Operational Areas within the Coastal Region. There are several communication sub-committees associated with this effort. All OES/HS staff are members of the California Emergency Services Association (CESA). Most importantly the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) mandates everyone work together through the Five Levels of SEMS (Filed, Local, Operational Area, Region, and State).



COUNTY OF SAN MATEO

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ADDRESS ALL COMMUNICATIONS TO THE SHERIFF

June 7, 2005

Honorable Norman J. Gatzert
Judge of the Superior Court
Hall of Justice and Records
400 County Center, 2nd Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Re: 2004-2005 Grand Jury Report on Homeland Security

Dear Judge Gatzert:

We wish to acknowledge the efforts of the Civil Grand Jury with this report regarding our Office of Emergency Services and Homeland Security (OES/HS). We feel the report is for the most part accurate, and depicts an understanding and appreciation by the members of the Grand Jury regarding the services provided by Sheriff's OES/HS.

We generally agree with the report with the following exceptions;

Please refer to the second paragraph on page five:

While the Federal funds have diminished, the 44 million dollars that was awarded to the City and County of San Francisco has been significantly reduced. This grant is separate from the Homeland Security Grants received by San Mateo County. While San Francisco received similar Homeland Security Grants to ours, the 44 million dollar figure comes from a separate grant called the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI). Our County is not identified as an UASI "City". We did receive some monies from San Francisco from the UASI as did Marin County.

Please refer to the first paragraph on page six:

The funds that were granted to the Regional Terrorism and Threat Assessment Center (RTTAC) were awarded through the Office of Domestic Preparedness Homeland Security Grant Program. The High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) is the home of the RTTAC as both entities are ineligance centers involved in specific threats. Both are funded through different sources.

We strongly support the Grand Jury's remarks regarding the shift OES/HS has made throughout the past four years. We have a unique County where we count on each other everyday regarding Emergency Services. Even when there are large sums of money involved, our leaders understand the true objective of preparedness in a very cooperative and forward thinking manner.

June 7, 2005
Honorable Norman J. Gatzert
Page Two

Recommendations

1. We agree that there is always going to be a need for increased communication needs. As technology rolls forward we understand there will be continuous upgrades needed to overcome communication breakdowns. Fortunately for San Mateo County we feel communication is best formulated by building bridges and relationships among all responding and support disciplines. Our current projects include information sharing technology and increased communications methods from voice, data, and wireless imaging.
2. Staffing can be increased when either our current budgets (Cities and County) improve to allow the additional cost to the Joint Powers Authority fiscal budget or when the Federal Homeland Security Grant Program allows for additional staffing paid by the grant.
3. All funds will be drawn upon well before the deadline. To draw funds prior to spending as in this one time variance will force OES/HS to place the funds in an interest bearing account and require us to pay that interest to the Federal Government. The bookkeeping on this effort will place more of a burden on the already busy OES/HS staff. Our purchasing efforts have become very streamlined throughout the years. The benefits of this "unique waiver" are outweighed by the administrative efforts needed to support it.
4. OES/HS attends and participates at all Mutual Aid Regional Advisory Council meetings with State OES, Coastal Region Staff, and all Operational Areas within the Coastal Region. There are several communication sub-committees associated with this effort. All OES/HS staff are members of the California Emergency Services Association (CESA). Most importantly the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) mandates we work together through the Five Levels of SEMS (Filed, Local, Operational Area, Region, and State).

In conclusion we appreciate the recommendations made by the Grand Jury and will continue our commitment to provide safety, security, and a uniquely cooperative approach as we face the possible threat of terrorism.

Sincerely,

Don Horsley, Sheriff

cc: Board of Supervisors