LOOKING BACK, LOOKING FORWARD:
Pressing the Reset Button on our Response to Terrorist Threats in the Los Angeles Region

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A Continuing Threat

A sprawling metropolitan area that includes the country’s second-largest city, the world’s busiest origin-and-destination airport, adjacent seaports that handle 40 percent of the shipping containers entering the United States, the tallest building west of the Mississippi, and a growing public transportation network make Los Angeles an obvious terrorist target.

Although Los Angeles has not suffered the volume of terrorist attacks and terrorist plots seen in New York or the nation’s capital, terrorists driven by various ideologies or imagined grievances have attacked or plotted to attack its major airport, high-rise buildings, diplomatic facilities, foreign dignitaries, schools, synagogues, museums, National Guard armories, banks, and sports and entertainment venues.

And while the United States can celebrate its most tranquil decade since the 1960s, the terrorist threat continues and, as we shall see, has recently become more complicated.

Efforts to Ensure the Security of the Los Angeles Residents have Improved

Even before 9/11, California had extensive experience in coordinating responses to large-scale natural and man-made disasters. Brush fires, earthquakes, and other emergencies obliged California to develop mutual assistance agreements and regional emergency response plans that ensured a unified effort. California’s Incident Command System, developed in the 1970s, and its Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS), created after the devastating 1991 East Bay Hills fire, provided the organizational model for the country’s National Incident Management System (NIMS).

Los Angeles has done much to improve its counterterrorist capabilities. The Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) has created a Counterterrorism and Criminal Intelligence Bureau that is second only to that of the much larger New York Police Department (NYPD). The Los Angeles Joint Regional Intelligence Center (JRIC) is one of the most effective intelligence fusion centers in the country, bringing together officials from federal, state, and local government agencies. The Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department (LASD) pioneered the concept. Its Terrorism Early Warning Group, created in 1996, provided a model for the country’s fusion centers.

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Preparedness planning for a naturally occurring or terrorist-created biological event, led by the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services, also has improved since 9/11, although budget cuts at the federal and state level will continue to threaten progress.
Through Operation Archangel, the LAPD works closely with other government entities and private sector owners and operators of critical infrastructure to identify vulnerabilities and assess risks. The city’s efforts are supported by a powerful and active private sector Homeland Security Advisory Council.

An independent review of the city’s preparedness for a terrorist attack, financed by the Ford Foundation, concluded that Los Angeles “is far better protected than most cities in the United States.”

The fact that the City of Los Angeles will host the 2013 National Homeland Security Conference is a signal of its continuing commitment.

**The Purpose of this Review**

This review focuses on the protection of the people of Los Angeles against terrorism and related threats. It is not intended to replicate earlier reviews or reports on the city’s preparedness. Nor is it intended to be a “report card” on the performance of city departments or on how well Los Angeles is doing in implementing various recommendations.

Rather, taking earlier reports as a starting point, this review identifies some of the areas where the city can further improve its preparedness in light of the changing threat and political and budgetary environments.

The question is, How can things be made even better?

**The Starting Point**

Shortly after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, the California State Assembly produced a bipartisan review of the impact of these attacks on California and the state’s readiness to respond.¹ This was the first of many reviews and studies commissioned by local government that would follow. These reports and related research provide the starting point for this review.²


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² While accepting sole responsibility for the views expressed in this report, I would like to thank Cathal Flynn, Michael R. Hillmann, John P. Sullivan and others who asked that their names not be mentioned for their helpful advice and critiques. I would also like to thank Janet DeLand for her skillful editing and the team at Peekabui for the creative formatting and presentation.
The terrorist threat persists, but it has become more complex and more diverse as new threats appear on the horizon. It is time to reset intelligence on terrorism.

Today’s fiscal realities require that local authorities look hard for efficiencies, economies of scale, regionalization, and consolidation.
governments are all under budgetary pressures—there will be fewer resources available for counterterrorism. Needless duplication and mission overlaps are no longer tolerable—today’s fiscal realities require that local authorities look hard for efficiencies, economies of scale, regionalization, and consolidation.

**Trends in Terrorist Tactics and Targeting**

Bombs still predominate in terrorist attacks, and most terrorist plots in the United States since 9/11 have involved bombs. Terrorists have bombed government buildings, centers of commerce, and places of worship. They have bombed trains, buses, and airplanes. Bomb attacks also have occurred at airports in Russia, Bulgaria, Spain, and the United Kingdom. Prior to 9/11, bombings occurred in the United States at JFK International Airport, LaGuardia Airport, and Los Angeles International Airport (LAX).

Lone gunmen, like the killer in Oslo, Norway, are also a source of growing concern. The only al Qaeda–inspired terrorists who have succeeded in causing fatalities in the United States since 9/11 were two lone gunmen. Other lone gunmen who were not politically motivated have carried out numerous deadly attacks in the United States. Teams of active shooters attacked Mumbai in 2008 and attacked airports in Tel Aviv, Vienna, and Rome in previous years.

The possibility of terrorist attacks with shoulder-fired surface-to-air missiles has long been a security concern. Over the years, there have been many plots and some attempts to use such weapons, most of them in conflict zones. Reports that thousands of missiles are now missing from Libya’s arsenal have reawakened concerns.

The possibility of terrorist use of nuclear weapons or pathogens to carry out a large-scale biological attack remains very remote; however, there have been incidents of terrorist use of chemical and biological weapons on a small scale.

Terrorists have focused most of their attacks on “soft targets”—easily accessible public places, targets that have iconic value (e.g., New York’s Times Square), and crowded places that would yield high body counts (e.g., public transportation).

From these patterns, it is possible to envision a number of terrorist scenarios that could affect Los Angeles, in particular, the airport and the city’s transportation system.
Possible Terrorism Scenarios

Scenario 1: A Terrorist Bombing

Any site with iconic or symbolic value or a concentration of people can be a bombing target. Recently, terrorists have come to view public surface transportation as a venue for achieving high body counts, as we have seen in Madrid, London, and Mumbai. Since 9/11, there have been six terrorist plots against transit systems.

Airports, too, are targets. In 2006, members of Spain’s ETA terrorist group blew up a vehicle filled with explosives in the parking structure at Madrid’s airport, killing two people and injuring 52. More recent examples include the 2011 attack at Domodedovo Airport in Moscow, where a suicide bomber killed 37 people and injured 173, and the 2012 bombing at the Burgas Airport in Bulgaria, where a suicide bomber killed six people and injured 32.

Examples of bombings at airports in the United States include the 1975 bombing at LaGuardia Airport, which killed 11 people and injured 75, and the 1974 bombing at LAX, which killed four people and injured 36. A terrorist intercepted at the Canadian border in 1999 planned to detonate a large explosive device at LAX.

The hijackers of a TWA flight out of New York in 1976 also left a bomb in a locker at Grand Central Station. One police officer was killed while attempting to disassemble the device. This incident illustrates how aviation-related incidents can have consequences in other venues.

The attack could also be a car or truck bomb, formally called a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED), such as the car laden with flammable and explosive materials used in a 2007 attack at Glasgow Airport in Scotland.

Terrorists have focused their attacks on people in the publicly accessible parts of the airport, but airport facilities may also be terrorist targets. In 1982, terrorists retaliating for the arrest of a member of their group in Canada planted a bomb at the Air Canada cargo facility. Police disarmed the bomb. In 2007, authorities uncovered a plot by four would-be terrorists to blow up jet-fuel supply tanks at JFK Airport.
A bomb that explodes may be only the first of several devices. A bombing or shooting may be intended as a diversion for another attack or a means to attract a crowd that will then be the target of a second bombing. A shooter may leave behind a booby-trapped device or a VBIED. Multiple teams of shooters, some of whom may be equipped with explosives, may be stationed at multiple locations. There could be hot pursuits across perimeters. A response may require coordinated actions at the airport and other venues.

Wherever it occurs, a terrorist bombing raises immediate concerns about additional explosive devices, concerns that would be exacerbated by the inevitable surge of suspicious objects and hoax alarms in the wake of the bombing, which could bring about large-scale evacuations from terminals.

Decisionmaking would involve close collaboration among life safety responders (fire-damage assessment, paramedics, rescue) and law enforcement (mitigation of consequences, evidence collection, interviewing witnesses, crime-scene management, evacuation, mass casualties management, surveillance, follow-up investigation, and apprehension of offenders). The FBI would be required to activate the Los Angeles Field Office Crisis Management Operations Center (CMOC) and coordinate with local agencies.

**Scenario 2: An Active Shooter or Shooters**

At Lod Airport in 1972, three members of the Japanese Red Army opened fire on arriving passengers, killing 26 and wounding 80. Other notable assaults took place in 1985 at Rome’s Fiumicino Airport, where four terrorist gunmen killed six and wounded 99, and the Vienna Airport, where three terrorists killed two and wounded 39. In 2011, a lone gunman killed two people at the Frankfurt Airport in Germany.

A similar incident occurred at LAX in 2002, when a lone gunman opened fire in the International Terminal, killing one person and wounding four before he was killed by an El Al security guard. The incident required the LAX central terminal area to be shut down in order for the LAPD bomb squad to clear the parking structure to
In the wake of the 2008 armed attack in Mumbai; the 2009 shooting at Fort Hood, Texas; the 2011 attack by a lone gunman in Oslo, Norway; and the recent shooting at a Sikh Temple in Wisconsin, the active-shooter scenario has become a major terrorist concern of law enforcement. Much would depend on whether the gunman (or gunmen) opened fire and was immediately shot down, as in the 2002 incident at LAX, or was able to evade capture and continue killing (or to take hostages). A point of concern for law enforcement and fire services is that an active shooter will continue his rampage/killing spree until stopped.

An active-shooter incident requires flawless coordination among law enforcement, fire and paramedic and other entities. If an active shooter incident occurred at LAX, both the LAWAPD and the LAPD would immediately respond. Both have been trained in “active-shooter” response (Multi-Assault Counter-Terrorism Action Capabilities). Although LAPD has the more experienced Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) team, having actually deployed to counter active shooters on several occasions, LAPD SWAT would be a secondary responder in most, if not all cases. Responding to active shooters is intended to be a “come as you are affair” by field personnel.

It is important to note that the Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) has a significant role in responding to active shooters, and LAPD (and LAWAPD) must provide “force protection” for those fire fighters who go “down range” or into the “hot zone” to establish casualty collection points. As a tiered response to apprehension of “an active shooter” LAPD has collaborated closely with the LAFD in organizing casualty collection and command, and has trained with LAFD paramedics in response to active shooter incidents.

The LAPD also would be responsible for “crime-scene management,” as it would have primary investigative responsibility and would bring with it large number of resources. The incident might not be short-term and could proceed through several operational periods. The LAPD and LAWAPD have not exercised together in active shooter scenarios.

**Scenario 3: Terrorists Barricaded with Hostages**

There are numerous precedents for this scenario. Various venues have been involved, including embassies, schools, hotels, trains, cruise ships, theaters, airports, and aboard airliners. In 1973, terrorists took hostages at Rome’s Fiumicino Airport, and in 1975, took hostages at Orly Airport in Paris. Hostage-taking could be the intended objective (or unintended consequence) of an active-shooter attack (like that in Mumbai).
**Scenario 4: A Chemical or Biological Attack or “White-Powder” Scare**

The possibilities of chemical and biological attacks were demonstrated in the 1995 Tokyo subway attack and the anthrax letters and ricin incidents, in which government buildings in Washington, D.C., were contaminated. Several terrorist plots involving poison gases or ricin have been uncovered since 9/11. White-powder scares have occurred frequently since 2001 at numerous venues, including foreign and U.S. airports.

If a chemical or biological incident were judged to be a terrorist attack, it would require immediate evacuations and the deployment of specialist personnel. The threat set for civil aviation is established by federal authorities, therefore, they will take the lead in establishing the chem-bio threat.

**Scenario 5: A Terrorist Missile**

This is a long-recognized threat. (It was underscored as a concern in 1996 by the White House Commission on Aviation Safety and Security.) In 2002, terrorists with missiles in Kenya attempted to bring down an Israeli commercial jet; there were also missile attacks on commercial cargo aircraft in Iraq—one plane was hit, although it landed safely. Concern has increased with the reported disappearance of thousands of man-portable surface-to-air missiles from the Libyan arsenal during the recent civil war.

The United States has decided not to deploy costly antimissile technology on America’s commercial air fleet. Instead, airports and federal agencies have formulated contingency plans to reduce vulnerability. These include changing takeoff and landing procedures, intense surveillance, and patrolling in a large footprint beyond airport perimeters.

LAPD has done considerable research on mitigation of a terrorist missile threat, including the utilization of its Air Support Division (helicopters) to search for possible sites that terrorists might use for launching missiles.

**Lessons Learned**

One lesson to be learned from these scenarios is that what at first appears to be a single event at a single location may involve other components at other locations. Were such incidents to occur in Los Angeles, LAPD assets (including the LAPD’s bomb squad, SWAT team, crisis negotiators, and Air Support Division) might all be involved. The scenarios would require immediate, seamless, and continuing coordination between the two departments (and the necessary communications interoperability to support joint operations). LAPD, LASD, and FBI bomb squads and SWAT teams have trained together to develop standard operating procedures to resolve multiple, simultaneous incidents.
Recommendations

1. Los Angeles County public safety agencies need to review and reset their preventive intelligence efforts in light of changing terrorist threats.

2. The LAWAPD should be assimilated into the LAPD as a separate command.

3. The LASD should remain the principal agency for protecting the county’s expanding public surface transportation systems.

4. No changes are suggested for the structure of security at the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles at this time.

5. Members of the public should be enlisted to play a greater role in the prevention of terrorist attacks and in individual preparedness.
Recommendation 1

The LAPD Needs to Review and Reset Its Preventive Intelligence Efforts in Light of Changing Terrorist Threats

Although it is controversial, preventive intelligence has been a success nationwide. However, authorities need to review the local threat matrix. Al Qaeda’s operational capability to launch new large-scale terrorist attacks has been disrupted, but the organization’s determination to attack the United States remains undiminished.

Thus far, al Qaeda’s campaign to radicalize and recruit homegrown terrorists to carry out do-it-yourself terrorist operations in the United States has largely failed, although its efforts continue. Since 9/11, intelligence efforts have uncovered and foiled nearly all domestic terrorist plots, including a homegrown jihadist plot in Torrance, California.

For readily understandable reasons, much of America’s intelligence effort has focused on al Qaeda or the so-called jihadist threat. But as a consequence of its own organizational evolution and the continuing political turbulence in North Africa and the Middle East, the jihadist threat has become more complicated:

Al Qaeda’s historic center has been weakened, and the threat is now much more decentralized. Its affiliates and allies are now more active, especially in Yemen and Iraq. The rebellions in Egypt, Libya, Yemen, and Syria have both energized and enabled al Qaeda affiliates to establish new footholds. The conflicts also have attracted violent extremists from around the world, providing them with opportunities to spill blood and experience to hone combat skills. These new “fronts” do not all pose immediate threats to U.S. national security, but they complicate the current scene and pose a long-term threat.

Terrorists inspired by al Qaeda’s ideology are no longer the exclusive concern of U.S. counterterrorist efforts. Iranian-sponsored or -connected attacks in Thailand, India, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and the United States—and possibly in Cyprus and Bulgaria, where investigations continue—suggest a growing terrorist threat, which could escalate as tensions increase over Iran’s nuclear program.

At the same time, the violence in Mexico, especially its northern border states, which has ascended to what some law enforcement officials are calling a “criminal insurgency,” is cause for concern north of the border. Analysts fear that the horrific kind of violence seen in Mexico will spread north as criminal cartels compete to control the retail distribution of drugs in the
United States. Dealing with this effectively will require close cooperation between terrorist-related and organized-crime intelligence efforts.

Authorities have also uncovered new terrorist plots by domestic extremists, including anarchists and anti-federal-government elements. In light of future threats, a thorough review of current intelligence assets is essential.

A review of intelligence assets is essential.

London, UK—2005: Terrorists carried out coordinated suicide bombings on London Transport, killing 52. In 2009, terrorists plotted to carry out suicide bombings on New York’s subways but the plot was uncovered by intelligence operations.
Recommendation 2

The LAWAPD Should Be Assimilated into the LAPD as a Separate Command

To initiate this process, the LAPD should take the lead in preparing a detailed proposal for the assimilation of the LAWAPD, including an organization and operational plan and a proposed budget to present to the Los Angeles World Airports Commission. While the greatest improvement assimilation would bring about is in responding to a major terrorist incident, assimilation should address all aspects of airport policing, including security functions, routine crime prevention, investigations, badging, and traffic control.

Because airport security has been such a contentious issue in the past, it is discussed in greater detail here.

Terrorism Remains a Threat to Airliners and Airports

Terrorists continue to be obsessed with attacking commercial aviation. Security has made it much more difficult to hijack or sabotage airliners, although terrorists continue to contemplate ways to take over airliners or smuggle bombs onto them. As large, crowded public places, airports remain vulnerable to terrorism. A number of terrorist scenarios, discussed below, are of particular concern.

While the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has the responsibility for screening airline passengers and their luggage, airport security is, by regulation, the responsibility of airport management.

It is important to point out that airport security encompasses much more than policing. In most airports, access-control systems, identification and badging, camera systems, prevention of perimeter intrusion, and command and control (including operations centers that provide situational awareness) are the responsibility of a civilian security director who works with the information technology director, the vice president for operations, and others. By regulation, airports must appoint an airport security coordinator who is the primary airport official for coordination with the TSA. He or she receives and implements security directives that amend the airport security program (usually in response to some change of TSA policies). At LAX, the chief of police directs only police activities. All other security functions are assigned to a department of the airport’s management, headed by a civilian executive.

Some airports in the United States—including Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, Miami International Airport, Philadelphia International Airport, Denver International Airport, Chicago O’Hare International Airport, and Mineta San José International Airport and San Francisco International Airport in California—rely on the services of local police departments to fulfill policing functions.
A few airports rely on specialized police departments that cover harbors and airports, and in some cases, surface transportation facilities. For example, the Port Authority Police provide protection for port facilities in New Jersey and New York; JFK, LaGuardia, and Newark airports; and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (PATH) train between New Jersey and New York. Policing at Boston’s Logan Airport is provided by a dedicated unit of the Massachusetts State Police, which also polices Boston’s harbor. In California, the San Diego Harbor Police cover both San Diego’s port facilities and its airport.

Some airports have their own police departments. Washington’s Dulles and Reagan National airports are protected by a dedicated airport police department. (In fact, neither Dulles nor Reagan National is in Washington, D.C.) LAX fields its own LAWAPD, which also covers the airports in Van Nuys and Ontario, California.

Officers in independent airport police forces are direct employees of the airport, and therefore the forces have greater stability. Officers have greater familiarity with the airport’s geography and facilities and are more responsive to airport incidents. On the other hand, city police departments can provide more-specialized teams to deal with various aspects of counterterrorism (e.g., bomb squads and SWAT teams) and, if needed, large numbers of reinforcements.

There is no single correct solution to how an airport should be policed. An independent airport police makes sense in some circumstances—for example, where major airports lie outside the jurisdiction of the cities they serve, where an airport police department may cover several airports in more than one police jurisdiction, or where adjacent police forces are comparatively small and lack counterterrorist resources. In the case of Los Angeles, LAX lies entirely within the city limits and has a large, well-equipped police force, although Ontario Airport, which the LAWAPD also covers, lies outside the LAPD’s jurisdiction.

Whether an airport is protected by local police or by a separate airport police department is usually a consequence of local history. Most airports were in existence long before modern terrorists threatened aviation. Protecting airport facilities against ordinary crime such as cargo theft was handled by private security, with local police providing support. As airports grew in size and the volume of passengers increased, security became a more complex and professionally demanding mission, and some airports created their own police departments. Terrorists presented an entirely new threat that required an armed presence. Federal regulations require the presence or prompt response of armed sworn police officers at each passenger-screening checkpoint. (The regulation requires the police to be deployed so as to be able to get to the checkpoint promptly. They do not have to be stationed at the checkpoints. Some airport police departments,
including the one at LAX, prefer to station an officer at each checkpoint, but many see this assignment as wasteful.)

An organizational model, once in place, is difficult to change. Attempts to do so can provoke intense political combat, which transcends policing issues.

**Unique Aspects of Airport Policing**

Airport policing shares some aspects of municipal policing, but it also differs in a number of ways: Airports are unique physical environments that have precise rules, often federally dictated. Airport policing primarily involves crime prevention; there are fewer calls for response. Airport police provide more critical observation of behavior than intervention. Airport police face limited investigative opportunities. They deal with more commercial crime than violent crime and provide more assistance to the public. This does not mean that local police cannot effectively perform the tasks performed by airport security, but some airports require a dedicated, specialized command.

Counterterrorism is a primary mission of airport policing, but airport police have very little experience in dealing with terrorists...even less chance of experiencing an actual terrorist attack.

Airport police answer to airport management, whose constituents include the airlines and cargo carriers that pay the landing fees that account for most of the airport’s revenue. The carriers are, of course, concerned about potential terrorist attacks, but they can calculate the probabilities, and, as profit-making enterprises, they are also more driven by concerns about costs than are public officials. The airlines also have a legacy tendency to view the higher costs of highly trained, career law enforcement professionals as hard to justify.

**The Counterterrorism Mission**

Counterterrorism is recognized as a primary mission of airport policing, and while that is true, the fact is that terrorist events are statistically rare. Airport police departments are likely to have very little experience in dealing with terrorists and even less chance of experiencing an actual terrorist attack.

Passenger screening to protect airliners remains a federal responsibility carried out by the TSA. Police at the airport provide law enforcement support, since TSA screeners lack arrest powers and are unarmed.

In 1974, the so-called Alphabet Bomber detonated a bomb at LAX, killing three persons. In 1982, terrorists planted a bomb at the Air Canada cargo facility in retaliation for the arrest in Canada of one of the group’s members. Police disarmed the device, and there were no casualties. The most recent armed attack at LAX took place in 2002, more than ten years ago, when an individual began firing at passengers at the El Al check-
in counter at Bradley International Terminal. The shooter was promptly killed by an El Al security guard. The LAWAPD was not involved in this action.

There also have been a couple of interrupted terrorist plots. A terrorist who planned to bomb LAX in 1999 was arrested at the Canadian border. In 2005, police arrested several men who were planning to conduct a series of terrorist attacks on various targets in the Los Angeles area, including LAX.

In sum, there have been two thwarted plots and three actual incidents in 38 years. An event every couple of decades makes it hardly surprising that some airport police find their counterterrorist mission professionally unrewarding, even boring.

This is not to diminish the critical importance of preventive activity, including vetting those with access to secured areas of the airport, countersurveillance, watching for insider threats, and attempting to detect suspicious behavior, including vehicles parking at the curb. But realistically, not every attack can be prevented, and as terrorist to be planned not at the of airport police in limited to what might result suspicious activity reports.

What airport police deal thefts; disorderly persons; into secured areas; bomb-items, which must be treated as possible explosive devices; and weapons and other prohibited items discovered during screening of passengers and luggage.

Whether airport security is provided by the LAWAPD or the LAPD, the police will be required to conduct routine patrols, support the TSA at checkpoints, give directions and assistance to travelers, and engage in other activities aimed at preventing very low-probability events—from a professional perspective, perhaps not the most rewarding career. It is hardly surprising, then, that some LAWAPD officers feel frustrated. They sincerely believe that counterterrorism is their primary mission, but they know they are unlikely to ever see a terrorist. Their presence is a deterrent, but its deterrent effects cannot be measured. They are eager to investigate crimes but have few opportunities to do so. Although their role is critical, it can be seen as tedious. Obviously, these frustrations do not apply to all officers, but they can lead to jealous protection of turf, especially when there is a seemingly precious intelligence lead to be followed or a rare opportunity for action.

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3 Although the shooter in this case appears to have been mentally disturbed rather than acting on behalf of any political cause, the news media called it a terrorist attack. Public officials were reluctant to do so, which outraged the victims’ families, who demanded that it be called such an attack.
The 2011 Blue Ribbon Panel Report

In May 2005, a ballot was placed on the Los Angeles city ballot calling for an amendment to the City Charter that would allow the merger of the LAWAPD with the LAPD, an idea that had been floated several times before. Just two months before the vote, and obviously intended to affect the outcome, CTI Consulting, a private research firm, issued a report strongly endorsing the independent role and performance of the LAWAPD. Dismissing reports of difficulties between the two departments, the report concluded that cooperation was excellent. There were no compelling reasons to merge the LAWAPD with the LAPD, the report said. The measure allowing a merger was defeated at the polls.

While recommending that there be no merger, the CTI report suggested that “there should be a continual effort on the part of the Airport stakeholders to define, clarify, and strengthen the unified command system at LAX.” This could be achieved by enlarging LAWAPD’s role to include responsibility for managing the “entire Airport Security Program,” which CTI recommended. With regard to LAWAPD’s relationship with the LAPD, the report recommended that the LAWAPD and LAPD should “pursue joint training opportunities.” The CTI report did not specifically address the issue of counterterrorism, but it did recommend that the “LAWAPD and LAPD should develop table-top exercises with the LAPD SWAT, focusing on emergency scenarios that would include the need for a SWAT response.”

Oddly, in 2010, the LAWAPD’s own union undercut the glowing endorsement of the earlier CTI report by publicly claiming that LAX was “more vulnerable to a terrorist attack than at any time since 9/11.” Clearly, there were issues that had to be addressed.

To obtain an independent view, the mayor of Los Angeles charged an independent “blue ribbon” panel, chaired by two judges, with reviewing public safety at LAX. Its conclusions differed sharply from those contained in the CTI Consulting report. The 2011 Los Angeles Blue Ribbon Panel on Airport Security recognized the continuing terrorist threat to the airport. Instead of the close cooperation described by CTI, the Blue Ribbon panel noted the “insufficient and ineffective collaboration” between agencies responsible for the prevention of terrorism at LAX. Specifically, the panel noted the historical tension between the LAWAPD and the LAPD, which “impedes their willingness to . . . coordinate their counterterrorism efforts.” “Effective counterterrorism communication among law enforcement agencies remains elusive,” it said.

The panel noted that “for several years, LAPD officers . . . have attempted to forge a partnership with the LAWAPD” in assessing threats and vulnerabilities of critical infrastructure, but that the “LAWAPD has repeatedly declined these efforts.”

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6 It is not clear if this rejection came from the LAWAPD or Los Angeles World Airports [LAWA]. Airport authorities hesitate to allow outside agencies to assess vulnerabilities at their airports. In this case, LAW could have been reluctant to have the LAPD develop a long list of vulnerabilities for which it would have no responsibilities for mitigation, forcing LAX to make unwanted expenditures or risk the list becoming Exhibit A for plaintiffs who later sue LAW.}
Some of the examples of non-cooperation cited by the Blue Ribbon Panel seem petty—the LAWAPD’s failure to share information provided by the TSA with the LAPD, absurdly claiming that the LAPD does not have the proper security clearances; sending suspicious-action reports directly to the JRIC instead of the LAPD’s SAR unit, which, according to an unofficial agreement, is supposed to review and analyze them first; and isolating the LAPD contingent at the airport.

The LAPD maintains a sub-station at LAX with a 40 plus officer detachment for 24/7 patrol and criminal investigations involving felony crimes (murder, rape, assault, robbery, as well as theft and car burglary). Additionally, extraditions and narcotics detail personnel go through the LAPD sub-station, not LAWAPD. Until several years ago, LAPD officers provided law enforcement support for the passenger screening checkpoints.

Turf wars among police departments are not uncommon. The tensions between the LAWAPD and the LAPD are inherent in the differing organizational cultures of the two departments. These differences may be exacerbated by the LAWAPD’s resentment of what it perceives as the LAPD’s dismissive attitude toward the LAWAPD and by fear of ultimate absorption by the much larger LAPD—not surprising, given repeated attempts to take over the LAWAPD. Strong pressure on LAWAPD officers is exerted by the LAWAPD’s union, which sees amalgamation of the departments not only as a threat to the autonomy of the department, but as an existential threat to itself. While such tensions are not uncommon and are often understandable, they are unacceptable in terrorist crises.

### Unity of Command and Unified Command

“Unity of command” is a basic concept of organization that puts one person in charge at one time—each person reports to just one boss. While unity of command is essential in military operations (although military units may support one another during operations without a single commander), responses to natural disasters or major terrorist incidents require more-complex management by different entities—i.e., police, fire departments, public health services—each involved in different functions. No one agency is in overall command.

To ensure coordination, incident commanders from each agency involved usually assemble to form a “unified command,” that is, a single command structure to analyze information, assess the situation, formulate strategy, determine priorities, and coordinate the response, which each agency will implement within its own sphere of responsibility. The person who “leads” will shift as priorities change.

Depending on the type of incident at LAX, the unified commander of a multiagency coordination center would be the LAWA security director, if not the LAWA executive director. How this will work in various scenarios, however, needs to be worked out in advance and exercised.
A unified command system works best where there are fewer chiefs and agencies, functional areas are sharply defined, and participants, through actual events and exercises, have established close working relationships that allow them to anticipate the priorities and needs, as well as the management styles, of their counterparts.

Unified commands run into difficulties when they turn into large, unwieldy committees where jurisdictions and responsibilities are not so crisply delineated or where organizational cultures clash. As seen in the real-life examples and in the worrisome terrorist scenarios that could affect LAX, the divisions of responsibility and handoffs are not always clear. It is not just a matter of who gives the orders, but whether those who will carry out the orders have confidence in one another and experience working together.

**Possible Solutions**

The Blue Ribbon Panel on Airport Security offered strong arguments for the consolidation of the LAWAPD and the LAPD. Its members concluded that “strictly from an operational and security perspective, we are firmly of the view that the airport would be better off with a single merged police department.” But the panel stopped short of making this a specific recommendation. Instead of merging the two departments, which the Blue Ribbon Panel thought was politically unfeasible, it recommended that the LAWAPD make counterterrorism its top priority, update its security plans, and create the position of Director of Intelligence.

However, cooperation between the two police departments has not significantly improved since the Blue Ribbon Panel Report, and it is not convincing that external exhortation will resolve the cultural differences between the two departments. Perhaps, a determined effort by new leadership could, over time, improve cooperation. More precise memorandums of understanding that address command issues and departmental roles in various scenarios could reduce confusion and possible conflicts if exercised together in tabletop and field exercises. Ending the LAPD’s isolation at the airport would be a start.

In my view, however, the most direct way to resolve the problem would be to amalgamate the two departments by assimilating the LAWAPD into the LAPD. This conclusion is based strictly on an operational and security perspective, not on the political feasibility of achieving such a merger. It is hardly a new idea and it has failed before due to a variety of reasons unconnected with organizational logic.

To ensure successful acceptance this time and a successful merger, the proposal requires more than a political initiative, beginning with a detailed plan to be prepared by the LAPD.
The LAPD should make a case to LAWA leadership that addresses legitimate concerns in the following ways:

- LAX will be treated as a priority security mission and not as a repository for going-nowhere and about-to-retire officers.
- The LAPD understands the challenges and can provide police services unique to the airport.
- The LAPD can perform these services as effectively or more effectively than the current arrangement provides and can do so at the same or lower cost. (A proposed budget is required.)
- The LAPD will address the sensitive issues of command and control in case of incidents at LAX in a way that meets the requirements of public safety and of LAWA’s director of security, who, by regulation, is responsible for airport security. To have LAWA’s support, the proposed plan must be mutually satisfactory.
- The LAPD will develop an amalgamation plan that is sensitive to the contributions and career concerns of LAWAPD sworn officers and other personnel.
- The LAPD will work with other jurisdictions to ensure the continued policing of Van Nuys Airport, which is inside the LAPD’s geographic jurisdiction, and Ontario Airport, which is in the city of Ontario.

In other words, LAWA management, which, according to federal law, is responsible for airport security for LAX and the Van Nuys and Ontario airports, must be convinced that joining its police department with the LAPD is the superior security solution, and LAWAPD employees must be assured that amalgamation does not mean professional destruction. If this can be accomplished, amalgamation will work.

The purpose is to improve policing, not to create staff redundancies, justify force reductions and layoffs, or alter existing union representation. Airport policing must remain a specialized task for the LAPD, requiring the existing experience of LAWAPD personnel and continuing training.

As an initial step, the entire LAWAPD could be assimilated into the LAPD as a separate command, maintaining its own leadership, structure, and pay scale. Joining the two organizationally would still leave other issues, which must be addressed. Subsequently, over a period of years, LAWAPD personnel could be formally inducted into the LAPD (LAWAPD officers have attended the LAPD Police Academy for more than twenty years, however the LAWAPD union put a stop to this practice for about six years). Other LAWAPD personnel would continue in other administrative and security capacities. Mergers do not automatically overcome cultural differences. Realistically, despite best efforts, a merger may cause continuing resentments and tensions between former LAWAPD personnel and the LAPD. Dealing with this will be a long-term effort, requiring exquisite sensitivity.
Arguments in Favor of Merging the LAWAPD with the LAPD

- It would facilitate a unified command and, more importantly, a more unified effort, which is crucial in responding to any terrorist-created crisis.

- Prevention would be enhanced by an easier flow of intelligence to and from those charged with security at LAX. It would also give those charged with airport security more-efficient access to the LAPD’s greater specialized resources, as required. It should allow economies of scale. If handled correctly, it should eventually reduce cultural friction between the two entities.

- It would broaden law enforcement career opportunities for LAWAPD personnel. Those officers assimilated into the LAPD would have more assignment and career choices. This would reduce the current tendency to go “off campus” in search of other police work.

- Airport policing would become a tour of duty rather than a lifetime career, allowing sufficient time for those assigned to the airport to become familiar with its unique environment and needs but then move on to other assignments. No doubt, some personnel would choose to remain in their jobs at the airport.

- Local precedence is provided by the LASD’s and the LAPD’s absorption of Rapid Transit District transit police and the current absorption by the LAPD of the Los Angeles General Services Administration police.

Arguments Against Merging the LAWAPD with the LAPD

- An airport is a unique environment, requiring specialized knowledge; a merger would dilute this expertise. The LAPD’s lack of appreciation for the unique aspects of airport policing could create new tensions with the airport’s own constituents.

- The LAPD might assign older, more sedentary officers to the airport, lowering overall effectiveness while increasing costs.

- There are fears that the continuing costs of airport security will increase overall (owing to differences in pay scales). Opponents of joining the forces have asserted that a merger would cost the city tens of millions of dollars. This must be addressed.

- There are concerns that funds designated exclusively for airport security will be siphoned off to subsidize the LAPD. (The LAWAPD instigated a lawsuit claiming that the LAPD had overcharged LAWA for its services. A subsequent investigation found no basis for the claim.)

- A merger would require a change to the Los Angeles City Charter; such a change is politically difficult. All previous merger attempts have failed.

- There are fears that a merger would disadvantage current LAWAPD officers. There has been and likely will continue to be strong resistance by LAWAPD’s union.

- A merger may be a source of continuing resentment between officers of the two departments, although it is believed that some LAWAPD officers would welcome a merger.
Recommendation 3

The Los Angeles Sheriff's Department Should Remain the Principal Agency for Protecting the County’s Expanding Public Surface Transportation Systems

While terrorists remain obsessed with attacking commercial aviation, public surface transportation has become their preferred killing field. Public surface transportation offers terrorists easy access (and escape), plus crowds of people in confined spaces that enhance the effect of bombs (and unconventional weapons)—in other words, soft targets and high body counts.

Since 9/11, there have been 75 terrorist attacks on airports and airliners, resulting in 157 fatalities. Since 9/11, there have been 1,973 terrorist attacks on trains and buses, resulting in 3,972 fatalities. Since 9/11, authorities have uncovered six terrorist plots to attack surface transportation systems in the United States. (One plot involved an airport.)

An aviation security model cannot be applied to surface transportation, because of surface transportation’s greater volumes of passengers, station configurations, human-resources requirements, costs, and delays. Prevention is a difficult goal.

While protecting aviation may be considered a matter of national security and protecting surface transportation a matter of saving lives (and therefore subject to stricter cost-benefit analysis), it is generally perceived that the allocation of resources for surface transportation security has lagged that for aviation security.

The Public Transportation System Has Grown Significantly

Metro Rail now comprises six heavy and light rail lines, with 80 stations. More than 360,000 riders use the system on an average weekday. Metro Rail’s two heavy rail lines together made it the ninth busiest rapid transit system in the United States—smaller than those in New York City, Boston, and Philadelphia, but roughly equal to Washington, D.C.’s Metro. Metro Rail’s light-rail-lines ridership makes it the second busiest light rail system in the United States.

Supplementing the rail system is the Metropolitan Transit Authority’s (MTA’s) extensive system of bus services, some of which operate as train systems, making MTA the third largest public transportation system in the United States by ridership. Current plans call for a significant expansion of rail and bus lines over the next ten years.
The MTA Metro and bus system connect with Metrolink, a commuter rail system serving Southern California, and Amtrak.

Current Security Arrangements

In 2009, following a series of complaints against private contractors, MTA handed responsibility for the oversight of all security operations to the LASD.

The LASD’s Transit Services Bureau covers the MTA’s six rail lines and bus operations, Gateway Complex, and other key facilities, with a dedicated force of Sheriff’s deputies augmented by security assistants. The Transit Services Bureau has a Metro Detective Bureau, a Metro Special Problem Unit, a Metro Explosives Detection Canine Team, and a Metro Threat Interdiction Unit focused specifically on transportation security issues.

Under a separate agreement with the Southern California Regional Rail Authority and Amtrak, the LASD provides security for Metrolink, which comprises seven commuter rail lines connecting Los Angeles, Orange, San Diego, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura counties.

This consolidation puts security responsibility for a large and growing regional transportation system into the hands of a single organization, which offers significant advantages. It enables the LASD to provide seamless coverage across jurisdictional borders. The LASD Transit Services Bureau is large enough to field dedicated personnel and specialized units, but it can still easily draw upon the resources of its 10,000 deputies.

Having a single organization also gives the LASD’s Transit Services Bureau greater flexibility in the deployment of its resources, based upon intelligence-led policing. Alternate security structures—a small independent transit police force or the division of security responsibilities among multiple police agencies—would not permit this.

The future challenge will be to maintain an adequate force to keep up with the expanding transportation system, within the budget constraints that affect all systems operators. To meet this demand, the LASD Transit Services Bureau has adopted a zero-based staffing approach.

Security can be enhanced by additional means, including improving intelligence and response capabilities and enlisting riders as additional eyes in “see something, say something” programs.
**Recommendation 4**

*No changes are suggested for the structure of security at the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles at this time.*

The Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach are the two largest ports in the United States. Together, they constitute the fifth largest port complex in the world, handling 40 percent of the containers entering the United States, supporting an annual trade worth $250 billion. In addition to cargo, one million passengers pass through the ports annually.

**Security at the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach**

There have been few terrorist attacks on port facilities, which are inherently large and robust targets. Terrorists have attacked vessels in harbors, using suicide bombers, mines, and shoulder-fired missiles. Indeed, terrorists have managed to sink a number of ships. They also have attempted to sabotage oil terminals, but they have succeeded on only one occasion.

The Ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles are viewed as potential terrorist targets, although there have been only a handful of incidents. In 1975, a still unidentified person planted a bomb aboard the Carib Star, one of the ferries operating between San Pedro and Catalina. The bomb detonated, sinking the vessel. There were no casualties. An attempt was made to sabotage another one of the vessels on the same line. A message from the perpetrators suggests that they were motivated by rumors that the line was about to be sold to Arab buyers.

Counterterrorist activities focus on the protection of port facilities, given their importance to the nation’s economy; the interdiction of weapons (in particular, weapons of mass destruction being smuggled into the United States); the security of passengers boarding cruise liners in the port; and, of course, the protection of all vessels. While counterterrorism is a primary mission, cargo theft and drug trafficking are also major concerns.

The nature of a port’s concerns makes its security much more technology-dependent.

Except for congregations of those boarding large passenger vessels, the ports themselves do not have dense concentrations of people, although the surrounding urban areas include both industrial property and residential areas that could be imperiled by a catastrophic terrorist incident. The ports are strategic, not people, targets.
Security at the port facilities is a multijurisdictional responsibility involving federal, state, and local agencies, including the U.S. Coast Guard, Customs & Border Protection, and other components of the Department of Homeland Security, the Port of Los Angeles Police, the Long Beach Police Department, and others. The federal government plays a larger role.

Recognizing this complexity, participating agencies have developed the Area Maritime Security Plan, which assigns responsibilities to both government and private sector stakeholders.

The unique nature of the ports’ security concerns dictates against organizational consolidation; therefore, this review suggests no changes for the structure of security at this time. However, authorities in both Long Beach and Los Angeles may want at some point to consider various ways of consolidating the port security and police agencies into a single entity or into their respective police departments.

*Los Angeles Harbor—1975:* A bomb exploded in the engine room of the Carib Star sinking the vessel. The saboteur was never identified.
Recommendation 5

Enlist members of the public to play a greater role in prevention and preparedness

The best way to increase our ability as a community to prevent terrorism and respond to natural or man-made disasters is to enlist all citizens through education and engagement. Participation also happens to be a very good way to reduce fear. The government alone does not provide security, citizens do. But Americans have departed from the long-standing traditions of self-reliance and mutual support and instead too often view themselves as passive bystanders, potential victims, dependent on fate and the actions of others to ensure their security and well-being.

Not Street Corner Posses

There are several ways in which the public can participate. One is by functioning as added eyes and ears, the objective of the “See Something, Say Something” campaign that has been made a national priority. No one wants to create a society of suspicion or street corner posses hunting for terrorist suspects, but many terrorist plots are in fact uncovered through investigations that begin with citizens’ tips. And 16 percent of the bombs hidden by terrorists in train stations, bus depots, or other public transportation targets were noticed by alert members of the staff or public who reported them to the authorities. Citizens’ tips lead to the arrest of criminals. AMBER alerts help apprehend fugitives.

The authorities cannot give precise instructions on what to look for. The person who rides the train every day, the truck driver who follows the same route, the hotel worker, the doorman, the security guard—they know when something is amiss in their familiar territory.

Mere exhortations to be vigilant, which accompanied the threat alerts in the anxious years after 9/11, do not suffice. Truly engaging members of the public requires that they be encouraged to be observant and that they not be reluctant to share something they find disturbing with authorities. It also requires that they be provided with a ready means of communication, which is easy in an age of cell phones and social media, and that the loop be closed with some acknowledgment of their participation—“Thank you, we’re on it.” During the years of the IRA’s terrorist bombing campaign, British authorities could depend on being informed of abandoned parcels within minutes. They responded, thousands of times to forgotten lunch bags, but sometimes they found real bombs. Public vigilance made the terrorists’ environment more hostile.

It is, of course, difficult to maintain a heightened state of vigilance when little happens—terrorist bombings gave London’s Tube riders a real incentive to be watchful. But “SeeSomething, Say Something” campaigns may also discourage ordinary crime. The campaigns are a mobile version of Neighborhood Watch programs, people looking out for each other.
Individual Preparedness

The public can participate through knowledge and individual preparedness. The first responders to an incident are often not the police or paramedics but nearby citizens. In a large-scale disaster, people may be on their own for considerable time while authorities are overloaded. The public needs to be educated on actual versus imagined risk, on the workings and limitations of security, and on how to deal with the spectrum of threats we face, from “dirty bombs” to natural epidemics. Citizens should understand and participate in their own security, not come to view it as an imposition or themselves as its victims.

Education should emphasize sound, easy-to-understand science aimed at dispelling the inevitable misinformation that some will promote, inoculating the community against alarming rumor and panic. More advanced training should be on offer, including specialized first aid and family protection measures. Our goal should be that all American teenagers, adults, and able-bodied senior citizens know how to take care of themselves first, then take care of their families, then take care of their neighbors who need assistance.

Californians have ample reason to be prepared for disasters, and research done by the RAND Corporation has found individual preparedness among Los Angeles residents to be good overall, but uneven. Perhaps not surprisingly, immigrants coming from disaster-prone countries with weaker government institutions were found to be somewhat better prepared than other residents. 

A Reservoir of Talent

A third way to increase the ability of the community and national resilience is to meet the sincere desire of citizens to actively assist others—it is an American virtue. Citizen volunteers can be assigned and trained for a variety of roles in emergencies. This is a nation of more than 300 million people, nearly 10 million living in Los Angeles County alone. Rather than a population to be managed in a disaster, it should be viewed as an immense reservoir of talent, ingenuity, and capability.

Everyone should be prepared to assist in a disaster and should have the opportunity to do so if needed. Even if not called upon to act, one may still help by being a source of knowledge and common sense, not a contributor to ignorance and panic, by not being a needlessly added burden on already stretched resources.

Authorities should formulate a strategy of citizen engagement, from security to recovery. There is a plethora of non-government volunteer organizations and government-sponsored programs that invite volunteer participants, including Citizens Corps, Community Emergency Response teams, the Medical Reserve Corps, and the Youth Preparedness Council. A catalog of this sometimes bewildering array of organizations and programs would be a good start.

This is a national effort, but in order to work, it must be a community enterprise. Los Angeles should have the explicit goal of being not only “better protected than most cities in the United States,” as the Aspen Institute Study found, but the most prepared community.

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Brian Michael Jenkins

Brian Michael Jenkins serves as the Senior Advisor to the President of the RAND Corporation. He is also the Director of the National Transportation Security Center at the Mineta Transportation Institute. From 1989 to 1998, Mr. Jenkins was the Deputy Chairman of Kroll Associates, an international investigative and consulting firm. Responsible for the firm’s crisis management practice, he directed the responses to kidnapping and extortion cases worldwide. Before that, he was Chairman of RAND’s Political Science Department where, from 1972 to 1989, he also directed RAND’s research on political violence.

Mr. Jenkins has a B.A. in Fine Arts and a Masters Degree in History, both from UCLA. He studied at the University of Guanajuato in Mexico and in the Department of Humanities at the University of San Carlos in Guatemala where he was a Fulbright Fellow and recipient of a second fellowship from the Organization of American States.

Commissioned in the infantry at the age of 19, Mr. Jenkins became a paratrooper and ultimately a captain in the Green Berets. He is a decorated combat veteran having served in the Seventh Special Forces Group in the Dominican Republic during the American intervention, and later as a member of the Fifth Special Forces Group in Vietnam (1966-1967). He returned to Vietnam on a special assignment in 1968 to serve as a member of the Long Range Planning Task Group; he remained with the Group until the end of 1969 receiving the Department of the Army’s highest award for his service. Mr. Jenkins returned to Vietnam on a third special assignment in 1971.

In 1984, Mr. Jenkins served as an advisor to the Long Commission, created to investigate the bombing of the U.S. Marines Barracks in Beirut. In 1985, he served as an advisor to the Inman Panel. In 1986, he served on the commission to establish new security specifications for the Embassy of the Future. And in 1989-90, he was an advisor to the Presidential Commission on Aviation Security and Terrorism created to investigate the PanAm 103 bombing.

Since the early 1970s, Jenkins has served as a consultant in a number of negotiations to bring about the release of hostages kidnapped for ransom or political reasons. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Mr. Jenkins served as a consultant to the Italian government and Italian corporations in dealing with terrorist attacks. From 1985 to 1986, Mr. Jenkins served as an advisor to the Catholic Church and from 1986 to 1991 as an advisor to the Church of England in dealing with the kidnappings of Western hostages in Lebanon.

Following the World Trade Center bombing in 1993, Mr. Jenkins, while at Kroll Associates, was part of the team that identified terrorist threats and developed new security measures for the World Trade Center.

In 1996, President Clinton appointed Mr. Jenkins to be a member of the White House Commission on Aviation Safety and Security. From 1999-2000, he served as an advisor to the National Commission on Terrorism and since 2000, he has served as a member of the U.S. Comptroller General's Advisory Board. Mr. Jenkins also is the Director of the National Transportation Security Center at the Mineta Transportation Institute, and since 1997 has directed the institute's continuing research on protecting surface transportation against terrorist attacks.

Mr. Jenkins has served as a Special Advisor to the International Chamber of Commerce and a member of the board of advisors to the ICC’s investigative arm, the Commercial Crime Services. Over the years, Mr. Jenkins also has served as a consultant to or carried out assignments for a number of government agencies. As part of
its international project to create a global strategy to combat terrorism, the Club of Madrid in 2004 appointed Mr. Jenkins to lead the international working group on the role of intelligence. He currently is a member of the Aspen Institute’s Secretary of Homeland Security Advisory Group as well as a member of the World Economic Forum’s Global Agenda Council on Terrorism.


Excerpts from the Mayor’s Blue Ribbon Panel on Airport Security

In 2010, Mayor Of Los Angeles Antonio R. Villaragosa convened a Blue Ribbon Panel to review security at Los Angeles International Airport. The Panel, which was chaired by Lourdes G Baird, a retired federal judge, with Judith C. Chirlin a retired Los Angeles Superior Court judge, serving as Vice Chair, comprised 25 distinguished members chosen because of the expertise in governmental affairs, public policy, airport operations, counterterrorism, and policing. The Panel was assisted by a staff and various individuals and government agencies.

After an extensive review of security and public safety at LAX, the Blue Ribbon Panel delivered its report on June 21, 2011. The report, which runs over a hundred pages, contained 58 recommendations. Selected portions of the report have been excerpted and included here. As indicated earlier, it was not the intent of this review to replicate the thousands of hours of interviews and detailed inquiries conducted by the Blue Ribbon Panel. Its report should be seen as the foundation for this later review. Some of the issues raised in the Blue Ribbon Report have been addressed. Some still remain problem areas.
Findings

1. LAX is safer today than it was following 9/11

On June 8, 2010, the Los Angeles Airport Peace Officers Association (LAAPOA) and the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) 721, the unions that represent the airport’s sworn police officers and non-sworn security officers, wrote a letter to the Chief of LAWAPD claiming that LAX is “more vulnerable to a terrorist attack than at any time since 9/11.” While we have many recommendations to improve security at LAX, we disagree with the unions’ claim.

The unions based their claim on (1) reductions in the deployment of sworn and non-sworn officers; (2) cuts to the budgets for training, and the replacement of vehicles and equipment; and (3) the failure to implement permanent checkpoints at each of the entrances to the airport coupled with a reduction in random checkpoints, but they ignored the additional security resources and the many security enhancements at LAX since 9/11.

Contrary to the unions’ assertions, the presence of security personnel at LAX has grown dramatically since 9/11. The number of LAWAPD sworn law enforcement officers has increased from 263 in 2002 to 448 in 2011. LAPD also maintains a permanent deployment of personnel at LAX, and has additional resources (such as the bomb squad and SWAT unit) that are available to respond to incidents at the airport. LAWAPD and LAPD also have officers assigned to the joint explosive detection canine unit, which has more canine teams than any other airport in the nation.

On the federal side, the United States Transportation Security Administration (TSA) was created following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and it has 2,400 personnel who administer an extensive passenger and cargo security program at LAX… The United States Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has enhanced its law enforcement presence at LAX significantly since 9/11 and has over 800 armed CBP officers assigned to the airport… In addition, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) all have law enforcement personnel deployed at the airport.

Significant physical and technological enhancements have been implemented at LAX since 9/11. LAWA has invested almost $387 million in security-related capital projects in the last five years, including a new security fence that has improved security on the perimeter of the airport and bollards and planter barriers at key locations within the Central Terminal Area (CTA) to block vehicles carrying explosives from being able to drive over curbs and penetrate terminal areas. Also, LAWA has worked with the TSA to implement a new badging process for all workers at LAX....

The Deny or Restrict Access Protocols Execution (DRAPE) program, which was created in 2008 on the recommendation of TSA, is intended to help secure LAX from an anticipated terrorist threat based upon intelligence received by law enforcement personnel. When activated, the plan restricts or denies access (redacted) and it can be accomplished with the LAWAPD and LAPD personnel currently on duty....

2. LAX remains a (redacted) terrorist target

LAX has long been a terrorist target and has had more incidents than any other airport in the nation....
Notwithstanding the improvements in airport security noted above, given its size, location, and number of passengers and stakeholder personnel, LAX remains a (redacted) target for terrorists seeking to disrupt air travel in the United States and terrorize the traveling public.

3. The prevention of a terrorist attack must be the highest priority at LAX

LAX is one of the largest airport complexes in the world...The Panel believes that the threat of terrorism at LAX is the most significant and consequential risk faced by LAX... The prevention of a terrorist attack at LAX, therefore, must be the highest priority for LAWA and LAWAPD, and it must be understood and supported by every employee at every level of every agency, public and private, which operates within the LAX footprint...Given the competing demands of running the airport and undertaking a massive construction project to expand the international terminal and renovate other terminals, there is a perception by some of the people we interviewed that security at the airport is a secondary priority for LAWA management....

The leadership of the LAWAPD acknowledges that the prevention of terrorism is its highest priority, but the mission statement and priorities of the LAWAPD do not clearly articulate that it is the most important priority. We believe that the mission of the LAWAPD has not shifted sufficiently to emphasize terrorism prevention and that a strategic plan aimed at re-focusing the mission, and aligning resources to this core mission is needed.

Moreover, LAWAPD’s allocation and utilization of resources do not always appear to align with this priority mission of the prevention of terrorism. We found that LAWAPD lacks a clear plan for the allocation of its resources in furtherance of its priority mission, which makes its ability to coordinate with LAPD and other law enforcement agencies to prevent terrorist activities at LAX more challenging.

Although the LAWAPD has taken significant steps to improve its ability to prevent a terrorist attack, it remains focused on responding to terrorist acts rather than preventing them in the first place...The staffing level of LAWAPD, both sworn and non-sworn, is robust – indeed, it is superior to those of comparably sized airports. (redacted)

Although LAWAPD does participate in anti-terrorism committees and task forces with other law enforcement agencies at LAX, the Panel believes that it needs to be more proactive in collecting and collating intelligence from the other law enforcement agencies to ascertain the threat picture and develop appropriate strategies for dealing with the threat...

4. The risks to non-secure public areas (redacted)

The risk of attack in the non-secure public areas of an airport outside the passenger screening checkpoints has not diminished with time, as recent incidents demonstrate: ....

The RAND Corporation, which was commissioned by LAWA to conduct a series of studies on options for protecting the airport from terrorism, determined that many of the major terrorist scenarios at LAX involved attacks on the non-secure, public areas of the airport....

The ARMOR program is currently used to establish random checkpoints at entryways into LAX. This program provides a measure of deterrence that is lacking in other airports, and it should be continued. (redacted) Progress has been made in installing concrete flower pots/bollards to provide protection against a vehicle with explosives crashing into a terminal in the CTA. [The “horseshoe” shaped road around which the passenger terminals are located.] (redacted) ....
As with any airport, areas accessible to the general public at LAX prior to TSA screening checkpoints remain vulnerable to attacks; any choke point where crowds assemble – (redacted) – presents a target of opportunity. With over 59 million passengers last year, LAX will remain a target for terrorist plotters in the future. (redacted)

5. The insider threat (redacted)

(redirected) The ‘insider threat’ is one of the most pressing concerns for LAX. Individuals with access to secure areas and knowledge of airport operations offer terrorists a conduit for exploiting vulnerabilities and circumventing airport countermeasures. One international foiled plot and two domestic foiled plots within the past decade, highlight the potential threat from insiders: (redirected) Insider threats will continue to pose security challenges. The potential for insiders who have access to sensitive areas of LAX to collaborate with terrorists exists. (redirected)....

6. The perimeter at LAX (redacted)

The perimeter of LAX consists primarily of fencing that surrounds the exterior boundaries of LAX. (redirected).... This fence is considered the “gold standard” in perimeter fencing because of its sturdy construction. (redirected)...

We recognize that the perimeter fence meets acceptable standards monitored by TSA. Given that LAX is a known terrorist target located in the heart of an urban area, surrounded by residential communities, with considerable traffic and commerce in the vicinity that is unrelated to airport operations, fencing that exceeds acceptable standards is needed. (redirected)

Various and alternative sensor technologies exist that are capable of protecting against perimeter intrusions and trigger alarms when they occur. (redirected) We believe that a technology-enhanced intrusion detection system is an important tool for securing a large geographic area such as LAX (redirected)

LAWA has also installed advanced vehicle access barriers and controlled access vehicle gates at each of the entrances to the airfield. Hydraulic barriers and “lion’s gates,” have also been installed at some locations. (redirected)....

7. Prior studies (redacted)

This panel is the latest in a list of evaluators who have reviewed security at LAX. The RAND Corporation was commissioned by LAWAN to conduct a series of studies on options for protecting the airport from terrorism. RAND reported its findings in a 2004 study entitled Near Term Option for Improving Security at Los Angeles International Airport and a 2006 study entitled Implementing Security Improvement Options at Los Angeles International Airport. (redirected)

A number of the security enhancement recommendations offered by the RAND Corporation in 2004 and 2006, (redirected) have been implemented and others are in process, but a number of the recommendations have not been addressed... We recognize that the airport has to wrestle with competing demands and priorities and that, as pointed out to us by LAWA management, there are engineering and practical difficulties in
implementing some of the recommendations. Nevertheless, we are concerned that prior recommendations made by qualified experts have not been implemented. (redacted)

8. There is insufficient and ineffective collaboration between agencies responsible for the prevention of terrorism at LAX

A large number of local, state, and federal law enforcement-related and public safety agencies work at LAX, including LAWAPD, LAPD, FBI, CBP, ICE, DEA, and TSA... As noted in many post 9/11 reports, terrorism prevention requires full, complete, and effective collection and sharing of information among all agencies charged with preventing terrorism attacks. It is well-recognized by all of the departments and agencies that the adverse consequences to ineffective communication are significant. Nevertheless, effective counterterrorism communication among law enforcement agencies remains elusive.

This challenge has long existed at LAX. (redacted) There needs to be better collaboration and information sharing among the agencies at LAX and, as discussed below, via a revitalized Airport Security Advisory Committee (ASAC).

The historical tension between the LAWAPD and LAPD... impedes their willingness to share information and coordinate their counterterrorism efforts. The lack of close planning and coordination between LAWAPD and LAP increases the risk that critical information may not be disseminated to each other in a timely fashion. (redacted)

Since 2004, LAPD’s Operation Archangel has evaluated over 500 locations throughout the City of Los Angeles for threats, vulnerabilities and consequences to assist owners and operators in assessing the risks to critical transportation infrastructures. The focus is on collecting and communicating the information required by an incident commander, and the assessments are entered into a database and periodically reviewed. Analysts use the information to identify vulnerabilities and develop risk assessments, secure critical infrastructures, and enhance recovery preparedness measures. For several years, LAPD officers at Operation Archangel have attempted to forge a partnership with LAWAPD. LAWAPD has repeatedly declined these efforts, citing federal regulations governing the disclosure of Sensitive Security Information (SSI) obtained or developed in conducting security activities that TSA has determined would be detrimental to the security of transportation. LAWAPD was of the opinion that the security requirements for the electronic database do not reach the threshold level required to bring it into compliance with the SSI regulations.

On August 6, 2010, LAPD’s Archangel personnel met with personnel assigned to LAWAPD’s Critical Infrastructure Protection Unit to again request their cooperation in an assessment of the airport. This request was denied by LAWAPD, citing their interpretation of the SSI.

9. The Airport Security Advisory Committee is not performing optimally

The mission of the Airport Security Advisory Committee (ASAC) is to assist the Airport Security Coordinator in support of the following objectives:

Membership in the ASAC includes: TSA, FBI, LAWAPD, LAPD, LAFD, the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department, California Highway Patrol, Office of the Governor, the City’s Emergency Management Department, and CBP.
Although the ASAC is supposed to be a high-level, interagency planning body to enhance collaboration among public safety and security agencies, it only meets quarterly. When it does meet, not all of the highest level managers of the public safety agencies attend the meetings.

We believe that the ASAC is an underdeveloped and under-utilized resource that could operate as a committee of high-level executives who are experts in security along the lines of the Area Maritime Security Committee, which coordinates the plans to address terrorist threats at the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach...

10. The gathering and sharing of intelligence is not consistent at LAX

...Aviation-related intelligence is not institutionally passed to all public safety agencies at LAX on a consistent basis. Intelligence sharing between local law enforcement public safety agencies and the United States intelligence community must be improved. The development of relationships and connectivity to provide each agency with key intelligence information regarding evolving terrorist threats in the United States and abroad, the reports of suspicious activity from other airports, and airport industry best practices to achieve continuous situational awareness and organizational self-improvement is critical.

The JRIC has multi-agency personnel from FBI, LAPD, LAWAPD, TSA, and CBP who focus on monitoring all aviation-related intelligence. The intelligence reviewed at JRIC originates from tips and leads submitted from LAWAPD officers and Suspicious Activity Reports (SARs), which are reports of suspicious activity from each agency’s headquarters and the United States intelligence community or world events. There is no apparent procedure to ensure that all of the agencies with responsibility for security at the airport, even those that are not members of JRIC, receive notice of all aviation-related intelligence or that JRIC intelligence briefings related to the aviation industry are disseminated to at least one representative of all these agencies in a timely or consistent manner. Because only certain agencies have personnel assigned to the JRIC, those agencies may receive the aviation-related intelligence faster than others.

Additionally, other than the ASAC, there is no regularly scheduled meeting among all public safety and security agencies at LAX to discuss the aviation-related intelligence and terrorism-related trends that have occurred and any actions taken....

There is no single process for all LAX partners to identify and address risks – threats, vulnerabilities, and consequences to LAX – on a continuing basis and to maintain that information in a secure web-based portal database....

There is no clear mechanism to ensure that appropriate aviation/terrorism-related intelligence received by public safety and security agencies at LAX is shared with private sector businesses at LAX. LAWAPD conducts monthly meetings, and TSA conducts quarterly meetings, with private sector businesses who are present at LAX. However, there is no standard method to ensure that all private sector businesses receive pertinent information about terrorism threats at the airport,
11. Counterterrorism protocols are not understood or are under-utilized

a. Suspicious Activity Reports are inconsistently used

The SAR program was developed by the LAPD’s Counterterrorism and Criminal Intelligence Bureau in 2007, and has been adopted nationally for reporting, categorizing and forwarding information while protecting privacy and civil liberties.

The public safety and security agencies at LAX handle SARs differently, and some agencies do not even generate SARs. The LAWAPD policy is to produce a SAR utilizing LAPD documentation. There is, however, a belief within LAWAPD that SARs submitted through LAPD do not reach the JRIC in a timely manner, and that the LAPD process and paperwork is too cumbersome. As a result, some LAWAPD officers utilize the JRIC Tip Sheet to submit SARs directly to JRIC. This is problematic because it bypasses LAPD’s SAR unit, which is supposed to review SARs and establish metrics within the City of Los Angeles. Thus, LAPD does not always receive information about the LAX complex even though it is within the City of Los Angeles and is within LAPD’s jurisdiction.

b. The Terrorism Liaison Officer program is under-utilized

Not all public safety agencies at LAX actively participate in the Terrorism Liaison Officer (TLO) Program, which is a valuable tool that provides guidance and training on terrorism-related behavior and suspicious activity to public safety agencies. The TLO program also provides a level of standardization about what suspicious activities to observe and report, and how to report them. Participation in the TLO program would provide each public safety agency at LAX with a resource who has a level of expertise in terrorism-related matters. Also, this same resource would have the capability to receive aviation/terrorism-related intelligence from, and exchange it with, the JRIC and other.

c. The Infrastructure Liaison Officer program is under-utilized

Not all private sector businesses at LAX actively participate in the Infrastructure Liaison Officer (ILO) Program, which provides guidance and training to the private sector about terrorism-related behavior and patterns, the latest suspicious activity trends, and how to observe and report suspicious activity at the airport. The ILO program also provides a level of standardization for what suspicious activities to observe and report, and how to report them. Participation in the ILO program by private sector businesses at LAX is, however, very limited.

12. Cargo security systems for passenger aircraft are robust

LAX is the thirteenth busiest cargo airport in the world. There are 92 airlines and 782 Indirect Air Carriers (freight forwarders) and Certified Cargo Screening Facilities that handle almost 1.9 million tons of cargo on both passenger and cargo aircraft each year at LAX. The number of third party air shippers is incalculable. More than 1,000 flights depart and arrive every day carrying cargo. (redacted)....

LAWA uses airport police officers, canine teams, and the Airport Police Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis Unit (VAAU) to assess vulnerabilities and provide security beyond the physical barriers in the public and secured areas of the airport. TSA and the VAAU conduct joint security sweeps, inspections and additional covert testing to mitigate threat and enhance the security posture in the cargo areas.
In August 2010, Congress mandated that 100% of all cargo traveling on passenger aircraft was to be screened for explosives, which has been met. The aircraft operators, Indirect Air Carriers, and Certified Cargo Screening Facilities are authorized by TSA to pre-screen cargo at on and off-airport facilities utilizing a variety of technologies, including explosive trace detection machines, advanced technology x-ray, explosive detection canines, physical search and large aperture x-ray units capable of screening pallets of cargo.

Notwithstanding these robust procedures, there are areas of concern. Most outbound air cargo packages are consolidated at off-airport facilities and arrive at airports on bulk pallets or in special containers known as unit load devices. (redacted)

The insider threat is a priority concern for the employees of the private sector entities with responsibility for screening cargo on passenger aircraft. Background checks are conducted upon initial employment for baggage and cargo handlers. (redacted) Workers with access to cargo and any employee who has been issued an airport identification are also subjected to Security Threat Assessments (STA) which is a continuous biographical check against various government databases....

**Law Enforcement Operations**

**Introduction**

Policing and protecting LAX involves many complexities and challenges. LAX is one of the busiest international airports in the world with numerous stakeholders who use and serve the airport, and it is currently in the middle of massive construction projects to expand the international terminal and renovate one of the domestic terminals. As noted, LAX is a (redacted) target for terrorists and encompasses over 3,425 acres with multiple access points and a vast perimeter. It has over 48,000 personnel who work at the airport, and over 59 million passengers traveled through LAX last year. In addition, there are numerous federal, state and local law enforcement agencies with both overlapping jurisdictions and distinct responsibilities for security at the airport. Effective and efficient public safety requires extensive real-time communications and coordination to ensure that these allied agencies work together effectively to police, protect, and secure the airport....

There is coordination and communication among the multiple law enforcement agencies with responsibility for policing the airport, although we believe that there is room for improvement....

The issues we identified in the law enforcement operations and security at LAX arise from the multiple priorities that LAW A has in operating, building, and securing LAX, the hybrid nature of the local law enforcement responsibilities of the LAPD and LAWAPD, the existence of multiple federal, state, and local enforcement agencies with responsibility for policing and securing LAX, and the lack of a single facility to house police operations at LAX.

Based upon our review of LAX operations and our interviews with many federal and local law enforcement personnel, we believe that LAWAPD needs more effective leadership to meet the public safety and security challenges at the airport. We also found that there was room for improvement in the coordination and communications among the allied agencies at the airport, and in particular, between LAPD and LAWAPD....
Findings

1. LAWA needs a high-level senior executive with overall responsibility for public safety at LAX

LAWA is under the leadership of an Executive Director, who reports to the Board of Airport Commissioners appointed by the Mayor...Ultimately, the Board of Airport Commissioners, through the Executive Director, is responsible for airport operations and security....

There is no doubt that LAX and the City of Los Angeles have a very capable Executive Director who has done an outstanding job in managing the operations and capital construction at LAX.... there is no Executive Director for Public Safety to oversee airport police services, to coordinate with LAPD and other law enforcement agencies, to oversee the acquisition of public safety equipment and security enhancements, and to focus exclusively on public safety at the airport. This position formerly existed, but was eliminated in connection with a reorganization of LAWA leadership in 2009, at which time the Chief of LAWAPD began to report directly to the Executive Director rather than to a Deputy Executive Director for Public Safety...[In response to the Blue Ribbon Panel's Report, LAWA created a Deputy Executive Director for Law Enforcement and Homeland Security.]

2. LAWAPD needs stronger leadership and accountability

...the LAWAPD command staff and the airport police union has impacted the coordination of law enforcement activities at the airport...

During our review, we personally observed LAWAPD officers standing around and talking with each other for extended periods rather than moving through the terminal and displaying a strong law enforcement presence.

...Given LAWAPD’s overlapping responsibilities with LAPD for providing police services, the need to coordinate with numerous other law enforcement agencies, and the critical need to address the ever present threat of terrorism, it is important for LAWAPD to have a focused mission and clear jurisdictional responsibility, which can be articulated in a well-developed strategic plan. Such an up-to-date plan...

3. The airport police union is undermining police operations at LAX

We have concerns about the airport police union’s approach to addressing issues that it may have regarding security at LAX...Instead of taking operational concerns about LAX security first to the LAWAPD command staff and the Chief of Police and then, if necessary, to the LAWA Executive Director and the Board of Airport Commissioners, the airport police union issued press releases publicly setting forth their concerns about airport security. For example, in a June 8, 2010 letter to the Chief of LAWAPD, the airport police union claimed – in our judgment, erroneously – that LAX was “more vulnerable to a terrorist attack than at any time since 9/11.” The letter was subsequently leaked to the media, which then reported the claim as fact.

The union has also issued other inaccurate press releases. Following the March 2, 2011 shooting of U.S. military personnel in Germany, the airport police union issued a press release erroneously claiming that the LAWAPD had “stepped up security” and thereby gave the misleading impression that there was a credible threat to Los Angeles. More recently, the airport police union issued a press release erroneously indicating that LAWAPD was on “heightened alert” following the death of Osama bin Laden.
We believe that the union’s actions undermined the authority of the LAWAPD Chief of Police and have the potential for undermining the public’s confidence in the security at LAX. We can see no justification for the union going public with its concerns under these circumstances...Overall, we note that LAWAPD officers and supervisors appear to work well together and with the LAWAPD leadership, and we saw no evidence that the Chief of LAWAPD and his command staff were unwilling to discuss operational issues with the union or take the union’s concerns seriously. To the extent that the union has legitimate security concerns, giving the LAWAPD command staff an opportunity to address those concerns can only enhance security at the airport and public confidence in that security.

There are historical tensions between LAWAPD and LAPD, and the union’s leadership has exacerbated those tensions, which is unnecessary, unprofessional and adversely impacts security efforts at LAX. The union leadership has made it clear that they believe that the presence of LAPD at the airport is unnecessary and that LAWAPD can handle all of the police operations at the airport without LAPD’s assistance except, perhaps, in the case of a major emergency. The union leadership’s attitude towards LAPD in some cases borders on hostility, and it has undermined the willingness of some LAWAPD officers to work closely with LAPD officers in joint operations. We were told of numerous examples of LAWAPD officers having concerns about being seen in the presence of or with LAPD officers. In one instance, a LAWAPD union representative assigned to the Joint Crime Task Force refused to shake hands with the LAPD officer assigned to head the Task Force.

We observed that for some LAWAPD officers there is a tension between their responsibilities for providing security at LAX, such as manning vehicle check points and passenger screening posts and patrolling terminals, and their desire to engage in more traditional police activities such as the investigation and suppression of criminal activity. Some officers (and in particular younger officers) find traditional police work more interesting than providing overall security at the airport. It appears that the airport police union exploits this desire by advocating the complete elimination of the LAPD’s presence at the airport, even though this is very unlikely to occur. This can undermine the ability of the LAWAPD command staff to deploy resources according to the security needs of the airport and to coordinate effectively with the LAPD to see that both agencies’ deployments are optimal.

4. There is a need for better coordination of police services by LAWAPD and LAPD and other allied agencies

There is a hybrid structure for police services at LAX with LAWAPD and LAPD having some overlapping responsibilities, some complementary responsibilities, and some distinct responsibilities. The agreed-upon responsibilities of these two police agencies are set forth in a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) executed in 2006.

*The Panel believes that in the situation, there would be a single police department under a single Chief of Police responsible for policing the airport. There would be a unified command, elimination of duplication, additional resources available to respond in emergencies at the airport, eventual elimination of the tension between LAWAPD and LAPD, more flexibility in the deployment of resources, and additional opportunities for LAWAPD officers. Although providing police services at the airport requires some specialized knowledge of airport operations, we believe that LAPD officers, working with LAWAPD officers, would expeditiously acquire the knowledge they would need to police the airport with the LAWAPD officers. [Italics added.]*

Further, we do not believe the concern that has been expressed by LAWA about diverting police resources away from LAX is valid. We recognize, as noted by LAWA management, that LAWA cannot divert revenue from airport operations for anything that is not airport-related, and there could be some complex accounting and
accountability issues if there is a single unified police department. Nevertheless, we are confident that the issues can be worked through and that a single police department under a single Chief of Police would recognize the importance of maintaining the necessary resources to ensure safety and security at LAX in light of the very real terrorist threat that exists. From an operational and security perspective, we are firmly of the view that the airport would be better off with a single merged police department similar, for example, to the policing of Heathrow by the London Metropolitan Police Service or Phoenix’s Sky Harbor International Airport by the Phoenix Police Department. [Italics added]...

We also do not believe that eliminating the LAPD police presence at LAX is in the best interests of airport safety and security. LAPD has the resources and specialized units such as SWAT and the bomb squad to respond to emergencies at the airport, it has the primary local law enforcement responsibility for identifying and responding to terrorist threats in the City of Los Angeles, and it has the detective resources to investigate crimes at the airport. We do not believe that LAWAPD can replicate the knowledge and experience that LAPD has to deal with domestic terrorist threats. Fortunately, there have been relatively few instances that required the response of a SWAT unit to the airport, but this means that LAWAPD officers do not have the same level of real world experience that LAPD specialized units have from handling numerous emergency situations in the City.

In addition, it is important to recognize that LAWAPD operates within the City of Los Angeles and that any criminal or terrorist incident that takes place inside LAX would likely have started outside LAX, and LAPD has the primary responsibility for responding to terrorism in the City. Cooperation and collaboration are critical to the success of any response to an incident that occurs at the airport. As set forth in the conclusions of the 9/11 Commission Report: “The attacks on 9/11 demonstrated that even the most robust emergency response capabilities can be overwhelmed if an attack is large enough. Teamwork, collaboration, and cooperation at an incident site are critical to a successful response. Regular joint training at all levels is, moreover, essential to ensuring close coordination during an actual incident.” And, as the Commission noted, collaboration is also essential to prevent a terrorist incident as well. Coordination and cooperation between LAPD and LAWAPD (and with the other emergency management and law enforcement agencies) needs to be a high priority for management of both departments.

Given the political and practical realities, it is imperative that LAWAPD and LAPD closely coordinate their law enforcement operations at the airport. We are confident that the two departments can work together effectively. New recruits train together at the LAPD Academy; the combined departments have more law enforcement personnel assigned to LAX than at any other airport in the country; they coordinate their daily canine deployments; they have worked together effectively on the Joint Crime Suppression Task Force and on joint deployments during the recent holidays; and the command staffs meet regularly and have acknowledged the importance of ensuring that the departments have an effective and cooperative working relationship. In addition, LAPD and LAWAPD officers take part in the FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) and the DEA Drug Task Force, and have officers stationed at the JRIC. These models can be replicated to further collaboration and improve coordination between the two departments.

Currently, however, there are a number of issues that limit the effectiveness of that coordination. Some in LAPD believe that its officers are better trained, experienced and capable, while some in LAWAPD believe that its officers are as well trained and capable, and have a better understanding of the unique requirements of policing and securing an airport. The tension is exacerbated by the lingering question of a merger and belief by some that LAPD is not needed at the airport, which impacts the willingness of the departments to work together closely.
The tensions between some officers in LAPD and some in LAWAPD lead to a lack of collaboration. For example, LAPD command staff does not always coordinate the deployment of supplemental resources with the LAWAPD command staff so that additional LAPD resources are sometimes deployed without the input, and indeed in some cases, without the knowledge of the LAWAPD command staff.

It also appears that communications between LAWAPD Command Staff and the LAPD’s LAX Field Services Division have broken down. Each complains about the other, and suggestions from one, even suggestions that are meritorious and aimed at improving safety and cooperation, are summarily rejected by the other and are not implemented due to distrust between the two departments.

We noted that LAPD supervisors and command staff believe that the LAWAPD commanders are reluctant to call on the resources of LAPD for fear that LAPD would take control over the police operations, which is understandable since LAPD has greater and more varied resources (e.g., SWAT, the bomb squad) available, and has considerable experience with numerous and varied incidents around the City. They also believe that LAWAPD does not always timely notify LAPD about incidents at the airport, which can delay the LAPD’s response to these incidents. LAWAPD officers, in turn, note that LAPD does not always timely notify LAWAPD when they respond to a call for service at the airport that is received directly by LAPD through the 911 systems. Although both departments monitor each other’s radio frequencies, direct notifications are much more likely to result in closer collaboration and cooperation in addressing law enforcement and public security issues.

There are also some specific deployment coordination issues. There is no joint public safety building at the airport to co-locate watch commanders and house most of the LAWAPD officers and the LAPD officers assigned to the airport. Command staff is physically separated from the rank and file. LAPD is located in a series of adjoining trailers next to Terminals 7 and 8, physically far removed from most of the LAWAPD officers. The geographic separation of the LAWAPD, LAPD, and other operational agencies is inefficient, and leads to a lack of coordination and perpetuates miscommunication.

Another problem is that the MOA between the departments is often interpreted differently by both departments, is not always followed in practice, and does not necessarily reflect the current allocation and utilization of police resources at LAX. Each department interprets the MOA to its own perceived advantage, and in a manner that is frequently inconsistent to how the other department interprets the MOA. The result is that both departments are engaged in what could be considered “mission creep,” in that they have expanded their duties or seek to expand their duties into the area that is the responsibility of the other department.

Further, LAWAPD is not integrated into the weekly crime control meetings of the LAPD Pacific Area or the monthly LAPD COMPSTAT crime inspections of the Pacific Area by the LAPD command staff. We believe that LAWAPD should participate actively in West Bureau’s COMPSTAT review. This would result in closer coordination of deployment decisions at LAX, joint responsibility to address crime trends at LAX, and improve professionalism and respect between the two departments. LAWAPD and LAPD command staff should jointly participate in the questioning of officers assigned to crime suppression responsibilities at COMPSTAT meetings and encourage the development of greater “community policing” practices with the businesses and stakeholders at LAX.

LAPD does not regularly notify LAWAPD of changes in LAPD forms and LAWAPD is not on the distribution list for LAPD training bulletins. As a result, LAWAPD officers do not always know of updated LAPD policies and procedures....
We noted that even though LAX is part of the City of Los Angeles, it is assigned to the Los Angeles County Disaster Management Area G, which encompasses some of the surrounding and nearby cities, rather than Area H, which encompasses the City of Los Angeles. This may have contributed to instances in which LAWAPD assisted police departments in the surrounding communities in law enforcement operations, which may have led to the perception by some in the media that LAX was left less secure because LAWAPD officers were deployed outside of the airport. While we do not believe this perception reflected reality, we nevertheless believe that LAX should be part of the area that encompasses the City of Los Angeles.

5. The parameters of the LAWAPD Emergency Services Unit’s mission are not clearly delineated

The LAWAPD Emergency Services Unit (ESU) provides an on-site capability to contain and stabilize an emergency crisis situation pending the arrival of the LAPD SWAT or FBI SWAT team. We believe that having such an on-site capability at the airport is essential since there will almost always be a time lag before a SWAT unit can arrive on the scene. The parameters of ESU’s mission and responsibilities are not always followed, and we believe that, absent clarification, there will be a tendency of ESU to respond to a tactical situation as if it were a SWAT team even though it lacks the training and experience of the LAPD SWAT team. This may be due, in part, to the irregular joint training between ESU, the LAPD and FBI SWAT units and the lack of ESU training standards and recordation requirements.

We note that the ESU possesses certain weapons and munitions that, at the time of our review, LAWAPD did not have a policy governing the deployment of these weapons or any memoranda of understandings with LAPD-SWAT or FBI-SWAT that clarifies its mission.

…. We also noted that the ESU facility/armory at the airport is inadequate to store and house its personnel, logistics and munitions. (redacted)

6. There are a number of training and intelligence issues that need to be addressed at LAX

We noted that the federal and local law enforcement agencies responsible for policing and security at LAX have not closely coordinated their training and intelligence gathering activities. There are no protocols for the allied agencies to evaluate actual incidents and training exercises to ensure that the lessons learned are followed, and emergency response oriented table-top and full-scale exercises among the allied agencies are conducted infrequently...

We also learned that LAPD has approached LAWAPD with some joint training opportunities that have not been accepted by LAWAPD leadership or not supported by the airport police union. Specifically, we learned, in addition to MACTAC, joint training was offered by the LAPD SWAT team and ICS Series training. LAWAPD declined the offer of joint training because they conduct such training internally, and in one occasion the union precluded LAWAPD officers from attending a joint training session. We find this to be troubling. LAWAPD does not have a Force Option Simulator for in-service training. A Force Option Simulator confronts officers with various simulated real world scenarios (such as an active shooter in a terminal) and allows officers to train to make the best choices when force may be required consistent with LAWAPD use-of-force policies. This is a critical training tool for all law enforcement personnel.
7. LAX needs to have state-of-the-art communications technology

We noted above that there is a perception by some that LAWA has not fully embraced the available security technology and that technological enhancements have not been a priority for LAWA. This includes technology that will facilitate communications among the law enforcement agencies....

We are also concerned about several other communications issues: the radio communications and interoperability between LAPD and LAWAPD is not state-of-the-art. (redacted)