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TO: Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, Chairman
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas
Supervisor Don Knabe
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

FROM: Wendy L. Watanabe
Auditor-Controller

SUBJECT: **SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT – REVIEW OF MARITIME OPERATIONS (Board Agenda Items 2 and 34, April 3, 2012)**

On April 3, 2012, the Board instructed the Auditor-Controller to review the Sheriff's Department's (Sheriff's or Department) boating and waterway (maritime) operations, including the Sheriff's request to purchase a $265,000 sonar-equipped boat (vessel). We sent your Board a memo on the sonar-equipped vessel on June 22, 2012, and your Board approved the purchase on July 10, 2012. This is our report on the other aspects of the Sheriff's maritime operations.

Background

The Sheriff's is responsible for law enforcement and public safety for all County coastal and inland waterways, except for the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, which are patrolled by each city's port police department. Federal agencies, such as the Coast Guard, are responsible for patrolling offshore waters. The Sheriff's also provides assistance to the other agencies in the ports and offshore waters under agreements with the other agencies.

The Sheriff's does not have a centralized maritime unit. Instead, four separate Sheriff's units share this responsibility: Marina del Rey (MDR) Station patrols the County coastline, with an emphasis on the Marina and Santa Monica Bay; Avalon Station patrols Catalina and San Clemente Islands; Parks Bureau patrols Castaic and Pyramid

Lakes; and the Special Enforcement Bureau (SEB) conducts specialized missions (e.g., high-risk tactical operations, etc.) in all County waterways.

Review Scope and Summary

We reviewed the Sheriff's maritime operations, including tracking of maritime operations and costs, use of vessels and staff, and maritime operations organizational structure. We also inventoried the Sheriff's vessels, and reviewed vessel acquisition methods and costs. Our review included interviewing Sheriff's management and staff, and examining related records.

Our review indicates that the Sheriff's needs to improve its tracking of maritime operations and costs. In addition, the Sheriff's should evaluate current vessels to ensure they are appropriate for their assigned usage, and consider training more deputies to operate vessels. The Sheriff's should also evaluate the feasibility of consolidating its maritime operations under a single unit. The following are the detailed results of our review.

Sheriff's Maritime Operations

Three of the Sheriff's four maritime units (MDR Station, Avalon Station, Parks Bureau) regularly patrol their maritime areas. The patrol activities include enforcing boating and other laws, conducting safety inspections, preventing environmental hazards, and monitoring for homeland security threats. They also provide search and rescue, vessel assistance, emergency medical services, and underwater recovery services.

The fourth maritime unit, SEB, does not continuously patrol County waters. This highly trained tactical unit (e.g., SWAT, etc.) conducts specialized maritime missions when needed. SEB's missions include searching high-risk vessels entering the ports for weapons, stopping drug and human smuggling, search and rescue, investigating dive fatalities, and underwater recoveries. The following table is a summary of the frequency of the Sheriff's units' maritime operations, and the number of vessels and staff used:

TABLE 1 - SUMMARY OF SHERIFF'S MARITIME OPERATIONS

	AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY	FREQUENCY	DURATION	STAFF	VESSELS
MARINA DEL REY STATION [PATROL]:					
HARBOR UNIT	Marina del Rey [1]	7 Days / Week	24 Hours	2	1
OFFSHORE UNIT	County Coastline	4 Days / Week	10 Hours	3	1
AVALON STATION [PATROL]: [2]	Catalina Island San Clemente Island	4 Days / Week	6 Hours	1	1
PARKS BUREAU [PATROL]: [3]	Castaic Lake Pyramid Lake	7 Days / Week	10 Hours	4 - 7	2 - 4
SPECIAL ENFORCEMENT BUREAU [MISSION]: [2]					
PORT SECURITY VESSEL BOARDING	Port of Los Angeles Port of Long Beach	Once / Week	2 Hours	6	1
SMUGGLING INTERDICTION	County Coastline	Once / Week	10 Hours	8	2
SEARCH & RESCUE	All County Waterways	Once / Month	3 Hours	4	2
UNDERWATER INVESTIGATION & RECOVERY	All County Waterways	Once / Month	1 Week	7	2

[1] MDR Station's Harbor Unit also periodically patrols critical infrastructure within Santa Monica Bay.

[2] Based on unit estimates.

[3] Parks Bureau deploys additional vessels/staff at Pyramid Lake when attendance increases, because alcohol consumption is prevalent and they are the only County agency operating on the lake.

County departments and organizational units should monitor their operations by tracking and evaluating operational objectives (e.g., goals, etc.), resources used, and activities. This allows managers to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of operations, document the level of services provided to the public, and justify funding levels.

The Sheriff's maritime units have established operational objectives that are consistent with areas of risk in the maritime environment (e.g., smugglers, capsized vessels, etc.), and similar to those established by other law enforcement agencies. However, we noted that the maritime units do not always track all their objectives, resources used in operations, and activities. For example, none of the units track vessel usage.

MDR Station and Parks Bureau are the only units that track daily staffing usage. In addition, Parks Bureau tracks and summarizes nearly all activities associated with their maritime operations (e.g., contacts with the public, vessel inspections, etc.). The other units either only track some of their activities, or do not routinely summarize all the activities they track. We also noted that the units have not identified standards or benchmarks to evaluate maritime operations (e.g., objectives, activities, etc.). Sheriff's management should improve the tracking and evaluation of their maritime operations objectives, resource usage, and activities.

Recommendation

1. **Sheriff's management improve the tracking and evaluation of maritime operations' objectives, resource usage, and activities.**

Sheriff's Vessels

The Sheriff's has 30 vessels, ranging from small inflatable dinghies to large vessels with homeland security capabilities. The Department primarily conducts maritime operations with 24 vessels, and uses the other six vessels for support functions (e.g., tenders for large vessels, maintenance vessels, etc.). The following table is a summary of the primary and support vessels for each maritime unit:

TABLE 2 - SUMMARY OF SHERIFF VESSELS BY UNIT

	MARINA DEL REY STATION	AVALON STATION	PARKS BUREAU	SPECIAL ENFORCEMENT BUREAU [1]	SHERIFF TOTAL
PRIMARY VESSELS:					
LARGE [GREATER THAN 35 FT]	1	-	-	3	4
MEDIUM [BETWEEN 25 FT & 35 FT]	4	2	1	2	9
SMALL [LESS THAN 25 FT]	1	-	7	3	11
TOTAL	**6**	**2**	**8**	**8**	**24**
SUPPORT VESSELS:	3	2	-	1	6
TOTAL VESSELS:	9	4	8	9	30

[1] Does not include the sonar-equipped vessel approved by the Board on July 10, 2012.

We could not determine whether the Sheriff's has an appropriate number of vessels because the Department does not track vessel usage or all maritime activities. However, different units need vessels with specific capabilities for different areas (e.g., coastal waters, harbors, lakes, etc.), functions, and assignments, and an adequate number of back-up vessels. For example, SEB has a large number of vessels with different capabilities which may be needed for specific missions. However, without information on SEB's maritime activities, we cannot assess the need for specific vessels. In addition, MDR Station has six vessels, but only three of the six are available on any given day due to maintenance issues, and the unit generally uses two vessels each day.

Avalon Station management indicated that they believe their two vessels are too small and not suitable for rough weather. They also indicated that one vessel has limited travel range because it has a small fuel tank, and inboard gasoline engines, which are not as fuel efficient as diesel engines. Inboard gasoline engines also have a greater risk of explosion if they are not used and maintained properly. We noted that other Sheriff's vessels also have inboard gasoline engines. Sheriff's management should evaluate current vessels to ensure they are appropriate for their assigned usage.

Recommendation

2. **Sheriff's management evaluate their current vessels to ensure they are appropriate for their assigned usage.**

Sheriff's Maritime Staffing

Because the maritime units do not track all their activities and staff usage, we could not determine whether the Sheriff's has an appropriate number of staff for maritime operations.

We did note that MDR Station may not have enough deputy boat operators to cover all the maritime shifts they currently work. They cover the shifts by assigning deputies who have limited experience operating vessels. However, without activity and staffing information, it is difficult to assess the appropriate number of staff and shifts needed.

We also noted that Avalon Station only has two deputy boat operators, who work different days, and operate the vessels by themselves. Because the deputies operate in the open ocean, there are additional safety risks with only having one operator. We noted that the other Sheriff's units always assign at least two staff to each vessel. Sheriff's management should evaluate maritime unit staffing, and consider training additional deputies to operate vessels.

In addition, the United States Department of Homeland Security (US-DHS) has cross-designated Avalon Station's deputy boat operators as customs officers. This allows the deputies to act as federal special agents and enforce federal customs laws. For example, with US-DHS' approval, the deputies can search vessels without a search warrant or probable cause. The cross-designation is especially useful for stopping smuggling activities. Sheriff's management should evaluate the feasibility of obtaining customs officer cross-designation for boat operators in other appropriate Sheriff's units.

Recommendations

Sheriff's management:

3. **Evaluate maritime unit staffing, and consider training additional deputies to operate vessels.**

4. **Evaluate the feasibility of obtaining customs officer cross-designation for boat operators in other appropriate Sheriff's units.**

Vessel Acquisition and Operating Costs

The Sheriff's vessels have a recorded acquisition value of approximately $7.1 million. Eighteen (60%) of the Sheriff's 30 vessels, totaling $6 million, were acquired through grants or donations, and three (10%) vessels, totaling $1.1 million, were purchased with County funds. However, the Sheriff's did not have the acquisition method or cost for the remaining nine (30%) vessels, and did not record the nine vessels in the County's accounting system (eCAPS), as required by County policy. Therefore, we cannot determine the value of these nine vessels. In addition, when the Sheriff's recorded the

21 vessels in eCAPS, they did not always include all of the costs of outfitting the vessels for use (e.g., additional equipment installed, etc,), as also required by County policy.

Sheriff's management should record all vessels in eCAPS, including the acquisition method, and the total cost/value of acquiring and outfitting the vessels for use, as required by County fiscal policy.

We also noted that Sheriff's units do not separately track maritime operating costs. The cost of each unit's maritime operations is recorded as part of each unit or patrol station's total operating costs. For our review purposes, we worked with the Sheriff's to estimate the annual direct cost of each maritime unit as follows:

TABLE 3 - ESTIMATED ANNUAL DIRECT COST OF SHERIFF MARITIME OPERATIONS

	MARINA DEL REY STATION	AVALON STATION	PARKS BUREAU	SPECIAL ENFORCEMENT BUREAU	SHERIFF TOTAL
PERSONNEL COSTS:					
SALARY	$ 1,650,800	$ 235,500	$ 783,300	$ 597,500	$ 3,267,100
OVERTIME	130,300	31,900	366,900	-	529,100
EMPLOYEE BENEFITS	1,010,700	141,000	500,900	362,600	2,015,200
TOTAL PERSONNEL COSTS	**$ 2,791,800**	**$ 408,400**	**$ 1,651,100**	**$ 960,100**	**$ 5,811,400**
VESSEL COSTS:					
MAINTENANCE & REPAIRS	$ 174,200	$ 13,100	$ 97,100	$ 53,400	$ 337,800
FUEL	81,700	42,900	26,600	20,700	171,900
TOTAL VESSEL COSTS	**$ 255,900**	**$ 56,000**	**$ 123,700**	**$ 74,100**	**$ 509,700**
TOTAL MARITIME COSTS:	**$ 3,047,700**	**$ 464,400**	**$ 1,774,800**	**$ 1,034,200**	**$ 6,321,100**
FTE STAFFING LEVELS: [1]	16	2	10	5	33

[1] Number of Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) staff directly used in maritime operations. FTE staff is based on a 40 hour work week and rounded to the nearest full staff position.

Sheriff's management should consider tracking maritime operating costs separately. This could be done by establishing specific codes in eCAPS for maritime operations, and using the codes to record maritime financial transactions (e.g., purchases, timecard hours, etc.).

Recommendations

Sheriff's management:

5. **Record all vessels in eCAPS, including the acquisition method and total cost/value of acquiring and outfitting vessels for use.**

6. **Consider tracking maritime operating costs separately.**

Organizational Structure

As noted earlier, the Sheriff's maritime operations are decentralized among four units (MDR Station, Avalon Station, Parks Bureau, and SEB). MDR and Avalon Stations, and the Parks Bureau report to Field Operations Region II. SEB reports to the Sheriff's

Office of Homeland Security Division. Decentralization can reduce efficiency and coordination among units, and operational oversight.

We noted that several law enforcement agencies across the country have centralized maritime operations in a single unit. This may provide increased operational control, standardized operations (e.g., procedures, training, etc.), improved crisis management, and flexibility to move equipment and staff to areas of need. Centralized operations also simplify tracking of operations and costs. Sheriff's management should evaluate the feasibility of consolidating all maritime operations into an existing single unit.

Recommendation

7. **Sheriff's management evaluate the feasibility of consolidating all maritime operations into an existing single unit.**

Review of Report

We discussed the results of our review with Sheriff's management. The Sheriff's indicated that they generally agree with our findings and recommendations. The Sheriff's will provide a detailed response to your Board within 30 days.

We thank Sheriff's management and staff for their cooperation and assistance during our review. Please call me if you have any questions, or your staff may contact Robert Campbell at (213) 253-0101.

WLW:JLS:RGC:YK

c: William T Fujioka, Chief Executive Officer
Leroy D. Baca, Sheriff
Sachi A. Hamai, Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors
Audit Committee
Justice Deputies
Public Information Office