

# **SAN DIEGO POLICE DEPARTMENT USE OF FORCE TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Approximately one year ago, in response to growing local and nation-wide concern regarding use of force by law enforcement, Chief David Bejarano of the San Diego Police Department formed a Task Force to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the Department's use of force policies and procedures. The Task Force's creation was announced during a City Council workshop in which the local concern over use of force issues was discussed. The Task Force's analysis included a review of Department policies and procedures in the areas of force, both lethal and non-lethal, training, pursuits, media issues, community issues, and interactions with the homeless and the mentally ill. As a result of this endeavor, the Task Force presents the following 100 recommendations for the Department's and the community's consideration and implementation.

The Task Force is comprised of 137 members – 71 community members and 66 members of the San Diego Police Department. The review was conducted by nine teams: four teams reviewed the various force procedures; the remaining five teams reviewed pursuit procedures, training, community issues, media issues, and mental health/homeless issues. The nine teams met regularly during the past year, sought input from the public and police officers, and submitted their recommendations to an Oversight Committee consisting of 18 community members and 16 members of the Department. Throughout their analysis, each committee's members reviewed past task force work, engaged in patrol ridealongs, attended academy training, and specifically sought input from the public. The Oversight Committee was tasked with coordinating the team's efforts and

finalizing – without changing -- the various team recommendations for presentation to the community and the Department.

Throughout the course of the Task Force review, three fundamental themes developed: (1) increasing the quality and quantity of communication between police officers and citizens at every level of interaction; (2) providing officers with all of the tools, training and reasonable and appropriate force options necessary to increase citizen and officer safety and law enforcement effectiveness; and (3) enhancing the community policing model presently used to lessen and ultimately eliminate the “us v. them” syndrome that so often exists between officers and the citizens they serve. The recommendations being presented in this report all relate to these three themes. It is the firm belief of the Task Force that the implementation of these recommendations will improve the overall quality and professionalism of the Department.

Beyond the recommendations presented, the Task Force review has also made it clear that, for any of its efforts to succeed, the citizens of San Diego and the Department must form a partnership, a community alliance, to work together and to reaffirm that we are all in this together. We must strengthen our understanding that we are dependent upon each other for our safety, that our ultimate goal is an effective Police Department that is both respectful of the community it polices and respected by that same community. We must also understand that only together will we succeed. This community alliance is therefore fundamental to the implementation of every recommendation made by this Task Force.

Early in our process, the Task Force focused on this alliance by ensuring that, in its structure and interactions, neither the community members nor the members of the

Department controlled or directed the dialog. Together, in partnership, we discussed sensitive and contentious issues; together we broke down barriers. And, together we faced the reality of the attitude of “us v. them” that exists on both sides of the so-called “blue line.” All of us on the Task Force learned that these barriers are a creation of both the community and the Department and that we are all responsible for their elimination. To truly break down these barriers, dialog must continue and we must remember that we are all (officers and citizens alike) part of the same community. Ultimately, each of us has the same interest in the improved safety and well-being of our community.

It is easy to review what an organization is doing and identify what can be done better. The difficult part is changing past beliefs and practices. We are engaged in a continuous process, and without that partnership and commitment, no real change can occur. For change to succeed there must be an absolute commitment from every element of Department leadership, beginning at the top, coupled with the fullest possible support from the officers on the street.

In the past, there have been similar task forces, similarly motivated and well intentioned. Each time, the police and citizens came together; each time, policies and procedures were examined; each time, the standards were raised; and each time this partnership was dissolved and the dialog and collaboration ended. That cannot be permitted to happen again. The Task Force must remain constituted to track its recommendations and develop additional recommendations, as appropriate. The Department must be committed, as a matter of policy, to continue its dialog with the citizens of San Diego.

To that end, the recommendations presented here are but the beginning of a process that will require every citizen to work toward the common goal of citizens and officers interacting with mutual respect, cooperation, and enhanced communication.