



**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES  
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL**

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June 26, 2019

TO: Supervisor Janice Hahn, Chair  
Supervisor Hilda L. Solis  
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas  
Supervisor Sheila Kuehl  
Supervisor Kathryn Barger

FROM: Max Huntsman  
Inspector General

SUBJECT: REPORT-BACK ON THE STATUS OF THE STUDY OF SECRET DEPUTY  
SUBGROUPS INCLUDING THE COOPERATION OF THE SHERIFF

This report-back is in response to your Board's March 12, 2019 motion directing the Office of Inspector General, County Counsel and the Civilian Oversight Commission (COC) to report back within 90 days on the status of a comprehensive study of secret deputy subgroups, including the Sheriff's cooperation with the study.

Status of Study

On June 5, 2019, the County executed an agreement with the RAND Corporation, a non-profit organization with a tradition of independent high-quality research and analysis involving complex and sensitive issues. The agreement calls for a comprehensive study of subgroups within the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD) that includes an examination of their formation, purposes, activities, and the internal and external perception of such groups. Specifically, the project will be guided by the following research questions:

- (1) What social groups or subgroups exist within the LASD? Why do they exist and what is their purpose?
  - a. Are the groups officially recognized by the Department? Why might some groups be officially recognized, but not others? Are there any perceived risks or rewards for disclosing group membership or group activities?

- b. What is the process for joining including initiation activities, and what other types of shared activities or attitudes exist within them? What types of conduct do their members engage in, both toward other LASD employees and members of the community? How do the shared activities, attitudes, and/or conduct impact the Department's ability to garner public trust?
- (2) Do social groups affect law enforcement or public safety goals? How are they viewed inside and outside the Department?
- (3) How, if at all, should they be managed? What policies or practices currently exist in the Department and what others might be relevant?

Additionally, this study will include interviews with LASD command staff, middle management, line-level deputies, and community members. This will be followed up with an anonymous survey of the approximate 10,000 sworn personnel. The RAND Corporation will also review department policy, and complete a comparison of best practices of similar organizations.

The 12-month study culminates with the publication of a RAND report that will include the complete methodology used in this study. The final report will include findings and actionable recommendations for changes and improvements. The project contemplates that RAND will present its findings to both government and community audiences.

#### Confidentiality Considerations

To ensure the best and most accurate information is collected, study participants will remain confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties, including local, state and federal entities and County officials and employees unless required by law.

#### Cooperation of the Sheriff

On April 18, 2019, the OIG, County Counsel, the COC Ad Hoc Committee on Secret Deputy Subgroups, RAND and Chief Matthew Burson from the LASD met to discuss the work to be conducted by RAND during the course of their study. Chief Burson advised the stakeholders that the Sheriff and LASD would fully cooperate with the study.

#### Civilian Oversight Commission

The COC included the Secret Deputy Subgroups item for discussion at their March 26, 2019 and April 23, 2019 meetings. The Ad Hoc Committee on Secret Deputy Subgroups is solidifying and finalizing a plan to obtain community feedback from

various stakeholders, in part to provide support to the community component of the RAND study. The committee is in the process of identifying several potential witnesses to provide testimony on the issues in future COC monthly meetings and town halls.

MH:BS:bs

c: Sachi Hamai, Chief Executive Officer  
Alex Villanueva, Sheriff  
Mary Wickham, County Counsel  
Celia Zavala, Executive Officer  
Brian Williams, Executive Director, Sheriff's Civilian Oversight Commission